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CAPTAIN FOULENOUGH AND COMPANY

BOOKS BY J. B. MORTON

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Who's Who in the Zoo
The Dancing Cabman
1933, and Still Going Wrong

CAPTAIN
FOULENOUGH
&
COMPANY

BY

J. B. MORTON
"Beachcomber" of the Daily Express

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TO

MY WIFE

My thanks are due to the Editor of the *Daily Express* for permission to publish this further collection from my column, " By the Way ".

The previous adventures of most of the characters in this book are to be found in *By the Way*, *Morton's Folly*, *Stuff and Nonsense*, *Sideways through Borneo*, *Gallimaufry*, *A Diet of Thistles*, *A Bonfire of Weeds*, *I Do Not Think So*, and *Fool's Paradise*.—J. B. M.

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I

CAPTAIN FOULENOUGH IN THE FUR TRADE

NOW there lived in a secluded Bayswater square a widow of singular beauty. She was on Captain Foulenough's visiting list, and when the ugliness of the world oppressed him he would look in on her for a cup of tea and a talk.

This widow's attractions suddenly became greatly enhanced, when Foulenough remembered that she possessed an enormous cat with a very fine, silky coat. His visits grew more frequent, and the lady was touched to observe that the Captain was at great pains to win the good graces of the cat and frequently remarked on the quality of its coat. " Jeremy, Jeremy," he would say musingly, " what a fine cat you are."

One day this widow, whose name was Lynette Owlesleigh-Frome, said, " Too terrible all this cat-stealing one reads about in the papers." The Captain sat as though turned to stone.

" The man who could steal a cat," continued Lynette, " ought to be shot. Don't you think so ? "

" No death is too good for such a man," replied Foulenough in some confusion.

" You are very kind to Jeremy," said Lynette.

" Were he your ape I would still cherish him, my dear," said the Captain.

" But you like him for his own sake ? "

" Oh, rather," said the Captain, with a treacherous smile, adding, " While these cat thieves are about, perhaps you would like me to take care of Jeremy ? "

" Oh, I couldn't part with him — but if danger really

draws near this neighbourhood I will ring you up."

"And I will be here to take him within the hour."

The Abduction of Jeremy

Two days later — and no wonder — Captain Foulenough received an urgent telephone call. A cat had been stolen from the house on the right of the widow's. Two more from a house on the other side of the square. Within the hour the Captain had arrived in Bayswater, and, while fondling the hand of the tearful widow, he graciously consented to remove Jeremy from the imminent danger. "I hope he won't have changed much when I next see him," said Lynette. The Captain made no reply, but popped Jeremy in a small bag and drove away in high fettle.

Maison Katzphur

Many a simple lady must have asked herself in perplexity, "But how can Katzphur Ltd. *possibly* afford to sell an ermine cape for £1 : 3 : 4?" The answer is — or was — in Tavistock Square: a nice plump pussy answering to the name of Pouchy.

Again, she might say, "How do they do it? Where on earth does this sable wrap, at £1 : 14 : 2, come from?" Dear lady, it comes straight out of a sack. That sable wrap less than a week ago was Bozo, pride of Lower Tungmere Street. Then Fred, hard (and often) bitten trapper, saw Bozo one dark evening, and pounced.

A sensitive girl, who had begun to suspect the truth, said the other day, "You know, every time I put on my mink coat, I think I hear a cat miaowing."

I hope I have made it clear that Foulenough himself takes an active part in what, in the trade, is called trapping. One of his favourite disguises is that of a gaunt spinster

named Miss Birdie Belchambers, Hon. Treasurer of the Catsmeat Guild. In this disguise he swoops in the name of humanitarianism. But he prefers to operate among the well-to-do, and to return to Katzphur with half a dozen prize-winners purring in his sack. There was a tense moment the other day when a maid, handling his overcoat clumsily, ejected from a side pocket two-thirds of a mackerel. " Been to a fish auction," said the Captain. " Must have got tangled up in my coat. Certainly didn't buy it." " Just the thing for Raven," said the maid.

Raven is now a sealskin stole.

I am not going to pretend that Captain Foulenough knows anything about running a fur business. But that is where Manon Caramel comes in. La Caramel was once the toast of the Brebis Qui Tousse, in the Place Pigalle. She is now the Captain's general manager at Katzphur House, or, as it is more properly called, Maison Katzphur. As Foulenough says of her, she can wear two and twopence-worth of tomcat's pelt as though it were worth a film star's ransom. The popularity of Turkish cat as a new kind of fur is due to her. But between you and me, the first consignment on the market was merely the result of a large haul on a dark night at the lower end of Church Street, Stoke Newington.

Some more Furs

" He said he had called to test the telephone," said the lady, speaking breathlessly to the police officer. " He had the words ' Telephone Service ' on the ribbon round his hat, and he jangled the instrument and kept on saying ' Hello, hello, hello ! ' Then he asked me to get him a small bit of thread for the nozzle, and when I came back he had gone, and there was no sign of Topsy. Her basket was empty."

" He said he had called to read the gas-meter. He

seemed such a nice man, and stooped to stroke Palmerston, and muttered, ' Sweet little creature ' — adding, rather impudently, ' Two sweet little creatures,' and staring at me saucily. He held the cat and stroked it while he read the meter. He then asked me to get him a bit of paper and a pencil, and when I returned he was gone. And so was Palmerston."

" Where are you going with that cat ? "

Captain Foulenough, hugging a stray picked up in Elmgrove Crescent, felt his spine grow cold as the gruff voice behind him repeated the question. Turning, he confronted a policeman.

In his jauntiest manner he replied, " Ah, officer, it's you. I was on my way to the police station with this poor little creature. I found it over there. Seems to be lost. With so many cat thieves about these days, one cannot be too careful."

" That's right, sir," said the policeman. " And I think I recognise that cat. I'll return it to the owner, if you'll hand it over."

And the Captain, making the best of a bad job, gave up his latest acquisition.

" He was such a nice, kind gentleman," said the cook at No. 14. " He came down the street distributing the most delicious morsels of fish to all the cats he could see. And he spoke so kindly, too. He said to me, ' Ah, cookie. Good morning to you, my dear cook. And how are we this morning ? And — why, bless my soul, do I not see a cat there ? ' ' Yes, sir, it's Pippy,' I replied. Then he called out, ' Ho, there, Pippy, what about a nice tasty snack of fish, eh ? ' And he held out a morsel. Of course Pippy went up the area steps two at a time. And, just to tease Pippy, he retreated up the street. We haven't seen Pippy since, but he'll come back. He was such a nice, kind gentleman."

No Catch

When Mrs. Fossdyke (Connie to us) came into the drawing-room, she was surprised to see her visitor, Captain Foulenough, standing like an awkward schoolboy, with the cat Barlow half in and half out of his capacious pocket. " Such pretty tricks he has," said the Captain, " clambering in and out of my pocket. Twitsy-witsy, then, come up, my beauty." The cat emerged, licking its lips, and rapidly finishing a morsel of fish.

" You good kind de Courcy," said Connie, " I do declare you keep fish in your pocket for my cat." " It's nothing, I assure you," said Foulenough, flushing uneasily, and darting a dirty look at the cat. " One must do what one can for the sweet pets," he added bitterly as Barlow left the room, and thus eluded the managing director of Maison Katzphur.

A Near Thing

" Miaow ! "

The lift-man glanced at the Captain. The Captain affected indifference.

" Sounded like a cat," said the lift-man.

" What did ? " asked Foulenough, conscious of the bulge in his overcoat pocket.

" Sounded like a cat," repeated the lift-man. " Probably Miss Armitage's lost again."

" Probably," said Foulenough, who had just made a call on Miss Armitage (Phyllis to us).

" Miaow ! "

Foulenough developed a hacking cough a second too late.

" Might be a wireless gone wrong somewhere," he said.

" No," said the lift-man, " that was a cat."

The Get-away

All the way to the ground floor Foulenough sneezed, coughed, spluttered, and stamped his feet, to drown further plaintive sounds.

" Miaow ! " and very loud.

" Seems to be in the lift," said the lift-man.

" Sounded to me further away," said the Captain, beginning to sing loudly.

" Hark," said the lift-man.

" So-oftly fall the shades of nigh-ight," bawled the Captain.

As the lift reached the ground floor, Foulenough sprang out, crying, " Late for my appointment," and took to his heels.

The lift-man stood rigid, listening, listening. At the end of five minutes he said, " Bah ! No cat 'ere. Must 'ave been my imagination."

Exit Pomfret

Captain Foulenough was the centre of a curious scene at a dinner-table in Kensington. The conversation, ably guided by our hero, turned to cats.

" The whole secret of managing cats," said Foulenough, " is to get them to trust you. They then attach themselves to you." At that moment Pomfret entered the dining-room and miaowed ingratiatingly. Foulenough slipped his hand into his pocket and produced a handful of fish. The cat was his friend from that moment. " He seems to have taken a liking to you," said the foolish hostess. How truly she had spoken she realised when Pomfret's basket was found empty the next morning.

And thus did Katzphur Ltd. acquire another ermine stole, or borrowed, as Foulenough preferred to put it.

Agents for Katzphur

It has come to the notice of the police that Katzphur employs a number of lonely spinsters as agents. They move about the big towns saying, " Oh, dear, if only I had a cat to keep me company in my lonely room." That is why so many maiden ladies of rueful appearance are seen daily entering the palatial Katzphur building with bulging sacks on their backs.

A Foolish Woman

" Captain ! In war-time ! I really must not accept such beautiful sables from you."

" See how they become you, dear lady. See how——"

Miaow !

" Why, Captain Foulenough, just look at Rosieposie ! What is it, pussy darling ? There, then, did they, umumumsicums. She seems to be angry. Look at her arching her back at you ! And look at her sniffing my sables. Woowoowoo then, did its little selfikins. Don't claw my sables, Rosieposie ! Down, darling, down ! Was ums want a stroky-poky in its backsywacksy then. What the devil is the matter, you little fiendypiendykins ? Must you really be off, Captain ? Oh, well, a million thanks for the furs — ouch ! Drat this little wretch. Seems to have a grievance against my sables."

Business v. *Pleasure*

Beauty draws Captain Foulenough with a single hair ; but which beauty ? Miss Lavinia Gratcham, with her lustrous chestnut curls, or her cat, Moompie, with its glossy black coat ?

For the first time for weeks, pleasure and business are having a tussle in the heart of the managing director of Maison Katzphur. Every time he strokes Lavinia's

cheek, she purrs, thus reminding him of the primary object of his visit. Every time he strokes the cat, it is again Lavinia that purrs, so happy is she to see her Moompie treated with affection. " It would break my heart," says Lavinia, " if anything happened to Moompie." And, though the Captain is not at all reluctant to break her heart, he would prefer to do it in a more romantic fashion.

So, between the two purrers the Captain hesitates. When he contemplates that prize cat (Battersea Baths Diploma 1936, St. Neots Medal 1937, Crawley and Southdown Senior Grade Medallion 1938, Mrs. Roughouse Cup 1939, Chelmscote Trophy 1940), he remembers that he is a business man. But when he looks at Lavinia, he remembers that he is a human being first, and a fur magnate afterwards. Meanwhile choice titbits for Moompie continue to be charged to the firm as overhead expenses.

" Six days," said Manon Caramel, " you have been working on that Kensington champion, Moompie. The results to date are a smear of lipstick on your collar, powder on your coat sleeve, a rapid rise in overhead expenses, a dreamy look in your eye, and the initials L. G. scribbled all over the rough proof of our new catalogue. Those initials might stand for Lavinia Gratcham."

" Or Lloyd George," said the Captain, with an attempt at jauntiness. " My dear Caramel, the road to a cat lies often through the heart of its mistress." " By-pass it," snapped Manon irritably.

He Hesitates

Betting in the fur trade is about even. Whenever Foulenough glances at Moompie, lying by the fire, he feels that he is looking at one of the little Princes in the Tower. Conscience gnaws him with its iron teeth. And his evil genius whispers, " What a lark it would be to sell

this lovely lady a fur coat made out of her own cat." And, " Oh, dastardly trick ! " whispers his Better Self.

Every day he calls, and every day he leaves, with an empty bag. " That cat at the Kensington address," says Manon Caramel, " seems to be giving you a lot of trouble." " She's not a cat," flashes back the Captain angrily, thinking of Lavinia. " Oho ! " says Manon. " Is that the way the wind blows ? "

Meanwhile the Captain has bought a gay ribbon for Moompie's neck. " Don't pull it too tight," says Lavinia, " you might hurt the darling." " Over my own dead body," retorts the gallant fur-trader with feigned ardour. " Ah, Moompsie-Woompsie," murmurs Lavinia. " There, then," adds the Captain, tweaking its ear. And then, in a firm voice, " Are you never afraid of thieves ? " " Thieves ? " cries Lavinia, clutching her amethyst ring. " Cat thieves," says the Captain. Lavinia grows pale. " I was only joking," says the Captain, brushing an imaginary crumb from his sleeve, and affecting nonchalance. " Damn it," he mutters under his breath.

" Would you take Moompie ? " sighed Lavinia.

" Would I ! " echoed the Captain, rubbing his hands.

Crisis

" Moompie has been stolen ! "

In these words Lavinia greeted the Captain, who started guiltily, as though he had done the deed himself.

" Oh, what beast in human form can have done so vile a thing ? " cried the Captain, when he had recovered. " Probably Fred — or one of our directors," he added, to himself.

" What am I to do ? " blubbered the beauty, twisting her handkerchief nervously. " Shall I inform the police ? "

" I shouldn't do that," said Foulenough hurriedly, " not till we know which firm stole — I mean, who — er —

well, you see, I mean, we've nothing to go on."

" He was stolen in the night, poor mite," said Lavinia.

" Joe, for a fiver ! " said the Captain to himself.

A Cunning Plan

During this painful scene, Foulenough was wondering whether he could persuade Katzphur Ltd. to restore the cat — if it was one of their men who had stolen it — and thus appear as a hero in the eyes of the lady.

" I will myself pull certain wires," he said to her.

" You mean you will get Moompie back ? " simpered Lavinia.

" I cannot promise. But I have some influence in — er — high quarters."

" You darling ! " cried Lavinia.

" Same to you with knobs on," replied her cavalier, grinning broadly.

The Trick

Foulenough, ill-at-ease, faced Manon Caramel.

" That — er — Kensington cat, Miss Gratcham's, er — have any of our chaps hauled it in ? " he asked.

" You bet. You were working too slowly."

" Is it — is it a fur yet ? "

" No."

" Then it must be returned."

" What are you talking about ? "

" She's on the trail."

" You mean you squeaked ? "

" Oh, no. But — the fact is, she got on to the police, and said she suspected us."

" You dirty rat ! You sold us ! "

The trick worked. Katzphur Ltd. fell into a panic. And that afternoon the Captain, beaming and heroic, returned Moompie to the delighted Lavinia.

" How did you do it ? " she cried.

" Gang of thieves," said Foulenough. " Got the Home Office on to 'em. Nothing, really. Only too glad to be of service."

" You darling ! " said Lavinia.

" That's the tune ! " crowed Foulenough.

Moompie stolen again

" Moompie's been stolen again ! " cried the beautiful Lavinia.

Foulenough muttered something under his breath.

" I've rung up the police," said Lavinia.

Foulenough swore silently.

But when the police officer arrived and said that a firm of furriers, trading as Maison Pussikote, was suspected, Foulenough's heart sang. Pussikote was Katzphur's biggest rival. This should ruin them.

" If the beast — the dear cat is returned," said the Captain to Lavinia, " you'd better let me keep it in safety for you. It's an old trick — er — an old method of security practised by cat-owners nowadays."

Foulenough's Triumph

And so the skilful managing director of Maison Katzphur was able to rejoice over the ruin of Maison Pussikote, convicted of cat-stealing ; and also to acquire Lavinia's champion, Moompie, by taking the animal into protective custody. His duty to the firm outlasted his love for Lavinia, and by the time he reported to her that Moompie had been run over and killed by a fish-lorry the silky coat of the famous cat was already swathing the broad back of a vulgar hoyden. By that time also the Captain had his eye on three monster Siamese, the property of a trusting and foolish old lady at Parsons Green.

More Psychology

The application of psychological tests to soldiers, to find out what kind of work fits them best, will lead to some strange scenes. What is to be done with the dreamy sort of man who thinks his head is made of glass, and has hysterics at the sight of anything blue ; or with the man who thinks he is permanently on horseback, and being followed by a swarm of large boll-weevils in tartan hats and wickerwork trousers ?

Examining Psychologist : If you had to put both your arms into the sleeves of your waistcoat simultaneously on a March afternoon, which way up would you hold the waistcoat ?

Soldier : Frontwise, sir.

E.P. : Corps of Signals. Report at once.

Army Psychology Test

1. If you had four legs and two and a half pairs of trousers, which trouser-leg would you leave empty ?

2. How would you arrange 63 match-sticks in pairs ?

3. If your watch says 6.21 at 4.18 (Double Summer Time) on June 6, what will it say at midnight on December 3, if you put it back one hour and six minutes every other day ?

4. Where would you wear your braces if your shirt was outside your waistcoat ?

The Villains of the Piece

It must be fully a fortnight since I read one of those peevish articles which explain that between us and Victory there are a crowd of illiterate fools wearing school ties. But I have just come across an amusing variant of the old grievance.

The villains now, according to a leading article, are "gentlemen in Victorian side-whiskers". Any such survival as may happen to read the article will no doubt smile ruefully at the idea of his immense powers for evil. The fact that one never sees these dreadful reactionares proves how cunningly they work.

My own opinion is that the real peril comes from gentlemen in Victorian side-whiskers *who wear their old school ties*. The combination is hellish.

Marginal Note

One of the major fooleries of basic English is the abolition of the word "shall". What on earth is gained by telling a Frenchman that the word at Verdun was "They will not pass" — an emasculated version of "They shall not pass"?

A New Vitamin

The announcement of the discovery of a new vitamin (W) in the bread which we are eating makes it clear that the time has come to tabulate the ingredients of the common or garden loaf.

Now I have proved (in my *Calcium Carbonate Intake — Its Cause and Cure*) that a man who eats four ounces of dehydromolised bread per day for forty-six days will acquire the Healthy Skin which Lands the Big Job. On the other hand, metagrabolised bread, containing two parts vegetol to three parts glaubolin, is a less beneficial agent, owing to lack of calorific particles. This may be counterbalanced by an intake of novomethuol in the form of rectified spinach essence. At least, I hope so.

Was it?

Dr. B. H. Rickmansworthy, writing in the *Zinc World*, mentions a curious case of a man who, through eating

the new mobile cheese, grew an extra pair of ears, four noses, and two more fingers on the back of each hand. Dr. Mimgrove claimed this as a case of refracted zogy-ostomy of the nebular thrimbex, caused by flodulence of the nerve tissues at the base of the lumbar nodules. But Dr. Pippingmeyer proved that the caudex cells in the Hayes canal might bragulate the saxotherm marticles by a gradual obigenation of the tharsal opticoccoea.

(See also Mrs. Calvoni's *To Bad Stensch with Dr. Stinckar.*)

Fun for the Young

The millions of young people whose one idea is to see more and more films will be glad to hear that the report on Youth Service, recently published, recommends planned film visits. I can imagine the Youth Advisory Council having heated debates as to whether the documentary film on the Habits of the Vole will be better or worse for the young than a rousing Government-sponsored film on what to do about tea-stains on a cloth cap. " Miss Tradgett, will you take your squad to ' Facts About Treacle '. Mr. Vumpton is taking his mind-group to ' How to Tie A Boot-Lace '." Cleanly, honest, unexciting fun, my dear Mrs. Fubbidge.

Could George Eliot do that?

> " Few outside her circle of friends know that, for all her prim Victorian appearance, she can twine one leg round her neck, so double-jointed is she."—(News item.)

Hiding her light under a bustle.

Ah, but can she scratch her ear with her big toe, while standing on her head in a tub ?

Musical Causerie

" How bewildering it is to a musician," wrote a critic the other day, " to feel the glance of his neighbour upon him for some minor fault."

Indeed, yes. When I was third fiddle in the Stamford Bridge Philharmonic, my short-sighted neighbour had to play the cornet solo in " Schackenminde ". All went well until he added a note, or what looked like a note, but was in reality a dear old fly hibernating at the foot of the middle page of the score. I said in a loud whisper, " That was a fly." " What was ? " he asked. " What you played," said the conductor. " Well, whatever it was, it's gone now," said the corneteer. And nobody dared play another note for fear it should be that fly, newly alighted on some other player's score. The audience grew restive, until a drummer killed the fly and the concert went on.

Talking of music, have you ever seen the muscles on a coloratura soprano's back ? I have. I sat behind an enormous one at a party years ago, and marvelled at the rippling steel as she bellowed and shrieked. I was so overcome with laughter that I had to creep out, for I had before my eyes not only this knotted writhing back, but the faces of the guests, not one of whom had the sense to protest against this uproar after a good dinner. Had I stayed, I fear I should have picked up a poker and played, in xylophone-fashion, " The Bells of Shandon " on that girder-bound, rock-hewn, gnarled and corrugated back. Stap me, but that back was riven into craters and crevasses like some ghastly lunar landscape. I was tempted to seize a rucksack, don my mountain boots, and start climbing by the shortest route up to her great shoulder.

What a back ! When she took a deep breath that back expanded like an iron balloon about to burst from its moorings. And there was a sound like the rattling and

rushing and grating of the pulleys on the Sligo quays in a storm. Poor old girl! Little did she suspect that her antics had about as much to do with music as Crewe Junction on an excursion day.

Yet if I wrote her name, half the musical critics would bang their foreheads on the ground, and drool and slobber with reverence. Such is the power of Mumbo Jumbo, the god of the cretins. . . . But that back! I have seen backs like it on the docks at Barcelona, when the sacks of meal are carried aboard. And the shouting was just as loud. But nobody ever thought of calling it music.

Passed to Us

" 2. Any reference in any Control of Paper Order to any other Control of Paper Order shall, unless the contrary intention appears, be construed as a reference to that Control of Paper Order as amended by any subsequent Control of Paper Orders ; and any reference in any Control of Paper Order to any Article of or Schedule to that Order shall, unless the contrary intention appears, be construed as a reference to that Article or Schedule as amended by any subsequent Control of Paper Orders. For the purposes of this Article any Direction made under any Control of Paper Order shall be deemed to be a part of the Order under which it was made."—(Official document.)

Century of the Common Man

Dame Gertrude Glapiron, O.B.E., opened today an Exhibition of Prefabricated Homes. Each house consists of a television set, a room for keeping forms, a garage, a dog's bedroom, and a mat of artificial grass on the plastic roof, for sun-bathing. The houses fold up into a small space, and are bright yellow. They have courageously modern names, such as Owaryer, Wottaboutit, Avanutha,

Ereweya, Dunwanderin, Pilgrim's Nest, O.K., Sezu, etc. Dame Glapiron made a hearty tea, and when called on to speak, said, " My mouth is too full for words."

Borax

Borax writes : " Are the Allies carrying out a gigantic scissor movement ? Are we and the Russians the crossed prongs of a pair of open shears, thus giving new meaning to what von Spurius calls the outward thrust on an inward nodal of action, a manœuvre calling for the maximum potential of power-force unclinched at a logistically vital moment for the adversary ? When we once realise that the object of every campaign, qua campaign, is victory, and the avoidance of its opposite, defeat, the mysteries of debouchment, deployment, and envelopment become clearer."

Chinoiserie

I have been reading, with misty eyes, of the wedding in America which cost £30,000.

A pretty story is told of the courtship. It appears that the young man, wounded by the arrows of the little god, called for his secretary one day and issued the following romantic order : " Get me the most expensive sculptor you can find, and dress him up as an Italian page of the sixteenth century. Buy an old English oak and have it shipped over. Then have this sculptor guy carve a heart on it. Have him put her name under it in pearls."

" Where'll we put the oak, sir ? "

" Aw, get it planted beside her swimming pool."

More of It

The place of the world-group-mind in federal planning was discussed yesterday at a meeting of the Universal World Plan Committee, presided over by Mrs. Cyprian

Wyckett. Among the speakers was Mr. Laurence Crowte, who said he thought that co-operation without co-ordination was useless.

There were cheers, and some cries of " No, no." Mrs. Wyckett restored order by pointing out that co-ordination *was* co-operation *at its best.* A motion to restrict the application of tentative measures to a re-statement of ways and means was rejected by 16 votes to 9.

An Important Publication

World-Group-Mind Pamphlet No. 1 makes succulent reading. It is a short exposition of what Mrs. Wyckett and her cronies regard as the " economic basis of reconstructional planning as applied to the problems of post-war ways and means ", and it attacks the complacency of those who " adhere to outworn shibboleths and discredited dogmas ". It is, in fact, an " outspoken plea " for a " re-statement of a possible approach to the internationalisation of resources ". In a final peroration it says, " Man is a citizen of the world-state first, and other things afterwards ".

Roast Meat from Bowlers

" Peeress Cooks In a New Hat ", says the headline. Rat me, says jolly Jack Hopkins, with a light laugh, this must be one of the new electrically heated hats, which enable ladies to toast their muffins on their heads as they go along the street. Or is it one of the hunting toppers from which deft conjurers produce Welsh rarebit with an impudent flourish, crying " Gone Away ! " and flinging the savoury morsel to the turbulent hounds ?

Electricity is a great boon. In the old days ladies who wished to cook in hats had to make a fire of twigs in the crown. Today the really fashionable hat contains, instead of a lining, a rack for plates and little shelves for spices and condiments.

Free Advice

A letter in a morning paper asks what is the best way to stop mice from coming downstairs in the early morning into the kitchen.

One way is to hide their trousers while they are asleep at night.

Ending the Muddle

" Unity of control will be assured by a system of dual responsibility to a joint command functioning in co-operation with its component parts. The two authorities responsible for directional and operational control will, by a pooling of administrative and executive powers, ensure a strategical and tactical unity by an equal division of central responsibility."—(Beachcomber News Agency.)

Blame the Fog

Dr. Strabismus (Whom God Preserve) of Utrecht was a victim of the thick fog the other night. He was due to address the St. Agnes Study Circle on the skull of the Peking Man (*Sinanthropus Pekinensis*), but went to the wrong place. He entered a crowded hall, dashed on to the platform, and began : " When we remember that this remarkable thing is about a million years old——" A menacing roar greeted the words, and he was informed by the chairman that he had interrupted the presentation of a rose-bowl to a lady physical-drill instructor.

Labour-saving in Art

I read that a new method of sculpture has been discovered, by which " the immense labour of carving stone by hand is avoided ".

This immense labour and waste of time has always been the trouble with all the arts. But there is no excuse, in an

age of speed, for keeping up the old-fashioned methods. Some of the younger poets already swear by the Versicometer, a remarkable invention which, when you turn a handle, emits down a chute a complete poem of the size and texture desired. Music and rhythm are avoided by setting a pointer, electrically controlled, before turning the handle. This method saves immense labour.

A quick way of composing music, now much in favour, is to cut out a portion, to the required length, from some printed score, afterwards transposing batches of notes, so that there need be no suspicion of a melody. This also saves immense labour.

In Passing

" Dinner or no dinner, we dine at eight." Those mysterious words which I overheard today reminded me of the magnificent Mr. Caplan, who said, " I get up at seven o'clock every morning, no matter what the time is." Then he argued the matter with those who attempted to point out his mistake, and he went on so long that everybody became dazed. Finally he convinced them that he was talking sense.

In the Studio

Reading of a film director who " always begins a picture by throwing away the script ", I am reminded of Hogwasch's methods.

At present Hogwasch is going through a South American phase. The other day it took quite a long time to explain to him why there was no Argentine scene in the film of " Barchester Towers ", renamed " Get Your Man, Baby ". When it was explained to him that this was a story about English country life, he said, " Have Jimmy Cagney fly to Rio in a bomber." " Why ? " they asked. " Why not ? " replied the director. " It don't say nothin'

about that in the scrip, bawss." " Say, this ain't a scrip we're making. It's a fillum, see."

" Say, chief, there's clergymen in it, an'——"
" Ain't there no monks in Rio ? "
" Yeah, but——"
" Have Jimmy Cagney fly to Rio in a bomber."
" Jimmy Cagney ain't in this picture, chief. It's Don Ameche."
" Have Don Ameche fly to Rio in a bomber."
" If that's the way you want it, chief."
" That's the way I want it."

" Say, chief, that number for Miss Lamour, ' Argentine Dusk ', it's in England, ain't it ? "
" What's in England ? "
" Why, Dorchester Towers, chief ? "
" So what ? "
" Szegtzl and me kinda figured, chief——"
" Have Jimmy Cagney fly to Rio in a bomber."
" O.K., chief."

In Passing

An official of the B.B.C. did his pathetic best the other day to explain the statement that " there is no special virtue in the egg just off the nest ". But the ordinary man will reply that he doesn't want fresh eggs because he thinks they are good for him, but because he likes the taste of them. Whatever marvellous " food values " were to be found in rotten eggs, nobody would want them — at least, nobody but the dunderheads for whom a meal is a chemical formula.

Overheard

" Surprised ? I felt like a cannibal who has just been eaten by a missionary."

A World Synthesis

(Being an Extract from a Pamphlet by Miss SARAH PLUM)

I wish to stress the importance, in all tentative world-planning, of the synthetical approach to questions of international reconstruction. What mankind is demanding, in all declarations of post-war reorganisation, is that co-operation in essentials shall be more than a phrase. There is no longer room for narrow and religious divisions, which have been in the past the weapons with which class interests deprived the masses of mankind of their international birthright. Only by encouraging the world outlook of the group-mind can we ensure that the control of essentials shall pass into the hands of the people; and the machinery for such a transformation of economic life can only be set up by using the best brains in the world to prepare a synthesis of ways and means.

Such a synthesis, to be anything more than an empty gesture in the void, presupposes a co-ordination of effort proceeding from the World Mind as exemplified in the progressive intelligentsia in every country. The pooling of world resources, in goods, knowledge, science, armaments, art, letters, and politics, can only result from a determination to use imaginatively the trend of world thought at the moment. There must be world committees in every land, studying and collating tendencies, with a view to examining the potentialities of the correlative impetus needed to incorporate the results in thousands of simple, lucid, brief Declarations of the Rights of what has been well called Homo Sapiens. These committees, interrelated and working in world union, must be the intellectual spearhead of an attack on the antiquated systems of thought — economical, racial, religious, political, sociological — which have too long imprisoned the Human Spirit. Each committee must be world-conscious, for each will be a cell in the universal organism of reconstruction. The reorienta-

tion of world-effort must be international in the deepest and widest sense.

The task of synthesis will be a slow one, and there will be discouragements. The planning of a new world is still stubbornly resisted by the privileged and the priest-ridden, whose unenlightened dogmas are encountered wherever the Human Spirit struggles to be free; to emerge from feudal darkness and mediaeval superstition into the blinding light of a new thought-concept. But the march of the world-mind is irresistible, and Science, which has brought to suffering mankind the aeroplane, the radio, and universal education by means of a rapidly printed and widely-distributed Press, is but at the commencement of her beneficent activities. It will be the task of the world committees to envisage a universe in which even those who are but scantily endowed with the world's goods will be able to leave Huddersfield after a snack lunch and sit down to a vitamin-tea in Korea; in which the interstellar spaces will be filled with millions upon millions of voices talking a universal language; in which television will bring to the Greenland Eskimo the news from Patagonia while it is happening. And to all this the key is that synthesis upon which I have so often insisted.

I will conclude these few obvious truths by submitting a rough draft for a simple Six-Point World Plan. Others can doubtless improve on it, with a view to the pooling of opinion. Here, then, is my World Charter:

1. A world synthesis of knowledge, prepared by international committees, working in close touch with each other, and actuated by a spirit of co-operation and co-ordination.

2. A pooling of world resources, by means of a ruthless destruction of all existing trade barriers, and a universal redistribution of raw materials among the masses, regardless of creed, colour, race, sex, age, or geographical situation.

3. The substitution of a universal World Class for the

present system of classes within nations.

4. The establishment by international law, promulgated by an international tribunal, of the imprescriptible right of every human being to have access to the accumulated knowledge of Mankind in every department of human life and activity.

5. The election, by a system of Universal World Suffrage, of an International Senate composed of intellectuals, whose principal function it would be to ensure the progressive character of the new World Mind; to stamp out reactionary tendencies; and to rescue from the obscurantism and greed of the Churches the slave-dupes of an outworn theology.

6. The setting up, in every country, of a carefully chosen and genuinely democratic House of Commons, on the model of the English institution.

II

THE ADVENTURES OF CHARLES SUET

OUR hero, Charlie Suet, was born in the tiny Cornish village of Polwaddle-in-Tretoothpic. His father, Henry Suet, was a humble fisherman who lived in a gem of Victorian architecture justly famed as the smallest house in England.

It was the house in which Henry had been born, and to it he brought his very large bride, Amanda Coopstake, of Balmorâl, Chesney-St.-Vitus, Bedfordshire. In attempting to carry her over the miniature threshold, Henry Suet cracked her head against the coping, and laughed heartily at the omen. She bore the mark to the day of her death.

When Charlie was born she pleaded with her husband to build on to their home, but he replied that there wasn't enough to build on from.

Suet's Boyhood

Charlie (luckily) was a small boy, and slept with his head in the kitchen and his feet through the door of the living-room. His youth was spent amid lobster-pots and tackle, and before he was five he smelt strongly of fish. As his mother grew fatter, she found the greatest difficulty in ever getting out of the house; the windows were scarcely large enough to pass a cat through. At seven Charlie caught his first gulchard, and at nine he knew how to bait a candle-end with slime to catch an eft. He was confirmed in the neighbouring church of Pengizzard Pibuloe, and went to school under Mr. Boogleaze at Stallion Zoodwillion.

His Little Home

As Charlie grew bigger and his mother fatter, the poor father could hardly get his foot inside the little house. The very walls seemed to bulge, and when Charlie lay abed in the kitchen his feet stuck through the living-room window. Passing friends would hang their hats on his feet, in jest. Either father or mother could sit indoors, but not both together, and when there were visitors the house was abandoned, and tea was served in the street.

Horrible Hester

What turned our Charlie's mind from the deep blue sea and the ways of fish to the pursuit of knowledge of a less useful kind? Reader, it was a Woman. Her name was Hester, and she was but lately down from Oxford, where she had been the pride of St. Theodosia's. What she did not know about social legislation wasn't worth knowing. Nor was what she did know about it. But it was she, with her bullying smile, who turned Master Suet into a serious student and made him tell himself that life was real and earnest. When her holiday was over she had returned to Birmingham, leaving a sadder and a sillier Suet.

Chance Encounter

A chance encounter at Weymouth with an aged mariner who kept a model ship in a bottle turned Charlie Suet's thoughts to this humble occupation. He made a dainty ship, but every time he tried to push it into the bottle he smashed the yards and tore the sails.

Finally he overcame the difficulty by inserting into the bottle a very small canoe made of match-ends glued together. He gave the whole thing an original turn by leaving on the bottle the label, which said " Rampound's Pale Foamy Ale ". He exhibited his work on the promen-

ade, but nobody took much notice of it — chiefly because the canoe was too small to see, and they thought he was some eccentric, advertising beer.

His Passion for Knowledge

When it became evident that Charlie Suet's passion for knowledge was a wild and undisciplined appetite, his uncle, Mr. Lurker, sent him to the renowned pseudopsychopathophysioanalyst, Professor Arthur Pownes Gingerbred (the *g*'s are hard, as in galvanometer).

The Professor tapped Suet's forehead with a small silver hammer, made him say " cow-cake " twenty times, and then asked him what subliminal urge the word recalled. Suet smiled, but said nothing, and after playing the fool (at ten guineas an hour) for two hours, the Professor discovered that his patient had pulled to pieces a valuable ormolu clock, the gift of a hysterical lady who thought she had a small Javanese grocer on her shoulder.

Encouraged by this experience, C. Suet, Esq., obtained work with a clockmaker. At the end of three days the clockmaker, a Mr. Towelbird, said, " I have never met anyone like him for pulling the clocks to bits. He is the best man I ever had for that branch of work. But he doesn't ever seem to put them together again. That side of the work apparently doesn't interest him. When I said to him, ' Where is that grandfather clock you took to pieces for Sir Stephen Blood ? ' he said, ' Ah, I know all about it now,' and made no further reference to the matter. When I was forced to get rid of him he said ruefully, ' I didn't just want to mend clocks. I wanted to get behind the inner workings.' So we parted rather coldly."

Further Adventures

An eccentric peer, hearing of Charlie Suet's passion for knowledge, said, " His energies must be curbed. He

will never keep any job. He should devote himself to the study of abstract knowledge, and to do this he must withdraw from the world."

So he sent for C. Suet, Esq., and informed him that he would place at his disposal a three-roomed cottage in a lonely part of the Cheviots, where he could pursue knowledge without financial worries or mundane contacts. Suet accepted, not knowing what the peer was talking about. On a bitter winter's night he arrived at the cottage with his carpet bag. He had no idea what he was supposed to study, and he nearly froze to death. On the second night he took the roof off to see what it was made of. Next day, with a bad chill, he decamped.

We next hear of the incomparable Suet in a public library on the outskirts of London. He said to the head librarian, " I don't just want to know what people write. I want to see how the books are put together and bound." With this purpose in view Charlie began to ignore those who asked for books, and spent all his time in pulling volumes to pieces and examining the fragments under his microscope (the gift of a foolish aunt). There were naturally complaints, and the whole affair came to a climax when an old gentleman who had asked for the Victoria *History of Surrey* found one hundred and seventy-nine pages torn out of Volume II.

C. Suet, Esq., was given his marching orders.

As an attendant at the Stockport Municipal Baths Charlie Suet was a resounding failure. To find out where the water came from he scraped a large hole in the side of the bath, carried it through the outer wall, and flooded the street outside. When dismissed he said, " I didn't just want to see how municipal baths are run, and how people swim about. I wanted to know how the water got there."

Getting Nowhere

Influence secured for the man Suet a post in a well-known picture gallery. "This," said his friends, "will give him a chance to study art — or, as he would put it, to find out what is behind art." And indeed Suet's first words, on being presented with his uniform, were, "I don't just want to look at pictures. I want to find out what——"

"I know, I know," interrupted the proprietor petulantly.

On his first day Charlie stayed late. The proprietor admired his zeal and devotion to duty, and left him to lock up. Charlie at once got to work to discover what was behind art. Daylight found him amid a pile of canvases which had been taken out of their frames, scratched with a penknife, and thoroughly investigated. By ten o'clock he had handed in his uniform and keys.

"At this period of his life," writes Miss Dredger, "Suet was in an experimental stage. He had not found himself. His remark to the man who was teaching him to stuff dead animals illustrates this." Suet said modestly, "You can't teach me anything I know about this. You've forgotten more than I ever knew." "I haven't forgotten anything," replied the taxidermist angrily. "Well, anyhow, I never knew anything," said Suet with a laugh.

Suet would never stuff anything larger than a mouse, because he said that one must begin in a small way "Elephants come later," he remarked patiently.

Miss Dredger on Suet

I cannot resist, nay, I have no wish to resist quoting again from Miss Hermione Dredger's *Suet: the Man.* She writes (in Chapter VIII): "The more serious side of Charlie Suet's character is best studied in his career at the Bodford School of Music, where he was for two years a porter. He never could carry an instrument for a student

without messing about with it, and either breaking it or dropping it. He would say, endearingly, 'I don't just want to hear people playing. I want to know how their instruments work.' In pursuit of this branch of knowledge he would think nothing of pulling a violin to pieces or breaking up an oboe."

Miss Dredger goes on to describe the abrupt termination of his portership: "One day," she says, "there was an important students' concert. The star pupil was to play the 'cello before the trustees and the governing body. The audience included many famous names. When the star pupil, Ernestine Full, arrived, Charlie Suet carried her 'cello for her to the artists' room. But on the way that fatal love of knowledge got him by the throat. Ernestine found herself with nothing but a few fragments of gluey wood and two strings. Charlie was apologetic, but he had to go."

His next job was in the cloakroom at a West End restaurant. But, as his biographer writes, he didn't just want to look at hats. He wanted to get at the mystery behind them. This passion for learning led him to pull the hats to pieces. And it was this experimental urge which resulted in the making of his famous white elastic hat without a crown, with which he endeavoured, unsuccessfully, to flood the hat market.

Charlie Suet's passion for acquiring knowledge, writes Miss Dredger, led him along strange paths. He once took a job as night watchman at a large factory where water-tube steam-generating boilers were made.

On his second night he yielded to his old temptation and began to meddle. He had the whole place to himself, and it was not long before he had pressed a small button. Then things began to happen. A horizontal electric steam churn-belt slid rapidly along towards a super super-heater. This started a 250,000-horse-power pressure-boiler, and

almost at once a hydraulic riveting machine burst its multi-drum geared rollers. There was a bright flash.

Next day Charlie Suet was sacked.

Still Getting Nowhere

Charlie Suet was very fond of an evening at the theatre. He was not in the least interested in plays or in acting, but he had a theory that the seats could be made more comfortable. So, whenever he had the money, he would purchase a stall for an evening performance.

He always brought with him his bag of tools, and as soon as the lights were lowered, he would set to work on his stall, humming and whistling happily as he sawed and filed and planed and hammered. The management usually protested, in response to the complaints of his neighbours, during the first interval. And after Charlie had been asked to leave, a man had to come and clear up the bits of wood and nails and screws.

In the case of the noisier and more rowdy operas he was often able to work even through the intervals, thanks to the din in the stalls. His record was three stalls sawn in half and painted bright yellow on a Wagner night.

Suet's next job was as a toast-master. He had a resonant voice and a good appearance. But at his first banquet he got to work on the back of the chairman's tail-coat. When the chairman rose to propose a toast his coat came in two, the seam down the back having been picked open. His braces had been severed, and down fell his breeches with a surprising swish. Furthermore, Suet had done something to his collar, which came off the shirt. There were titters all over the room, but Charlie kept on shouting, " Pray silence for your chairman," and finally the toast was proposed by the rubicund, indignant gentleman, who grasped his breeches in both hands in a manful effort to preserve his dignity.

Two More Jobs

Charlie Suet was once employed at a telephone exchange, but his interest in the mechanical side of the business exceeded his interest in the needs of the subscribers. At the end of his first spell of duty nine Kensington subscribers, all of whom had asked for London numbers, were amazed to find themselves talking to a dye-works in Scotland. Flashes of blue light terrified his fellow workers, as he pulled things to bits. " No man," he said, " can do his job thoroughly until he has mastered what lies behind the machinery of it." By tea-time he had melted down his earphones on a small stove. But it was only when he began to take the switchboards to pieces that the controller asked him to go. " Any fool," said Charlie, " can get a telephone number, but it takes brains to find out the why and the wherefore."

A report in the files of a certain railway company says : " The idea of entrusting such an individual with the delicate operation of testing the wheels of train-coaches was little short of madness ". This sentence refers to Charlie Suet's short-lived career as a wheel-tapper in the west of England. On his first day he knocked seven wheels to pieces, thus disorganising traffic on the line and doing considerable damage. It was only when he smashed the hammer that he reported his misadventures to the station-master.

Rather Ridiculous

Influence secured for Charlie Suet a post at the gates of a small suburban park as a seller of coloured balloons. But what fascinated our hero was not the demand for balloons, but the ease with which they could be punctured. He would return every day to his employer with no money, but with a handful of shrivelled bladders. The thing was

obviously impossible, and once more Suet faced an unpromising future.

After this, Charlie Suet, through the influence of his maternal aunt, Mrs. Mildew, acquired a lowly position in a Government office. His duty it was to blot the initials of his superiors on unimportant memos. But Charlie had read somewhere that paper was scarce. Therefore, rather than have it wasted by people who wrote on it, he tore up every bit he could find in the store cupboard. And that was the end of another promising job.

He wrote recently to the Ministry of Supply offering as waste paper 43,726 perforation holes which he had cut out of tear-off calendars. An official said, " But if they are perforation holes, they are just holes, and not paper at all." Charlie replied that when cutting the holes out he was compelled to leave little bits of the paper round them, otherwise there would be nothing left. When he said that if there was not enough paper he could paste small circular bits over the holes, the official screamed twice and fell to the floor with a sickening thud.

" There the matter rests at present," commented an unimpeachable neutral spokesman in touch with authoritative circles.

At a theatre the other night Charlie Suet decided to salvage a good deal of metal. He stealthily cut off thousands of trouser buttons, thus rendering the braces useless. At the final curtain, the hoosh of falling trousers was mistaken by the leading lady for hissing. She left the stage in hysterics, and the male members of the audience did their best to hold up their breeches while making for the exit. Many a man was forced to wear his shirt outside his waistcoat, while using his braces as a belt.

His Patriotism

Charlie Suet, convinced that the larger the article bought, the more paper will be saved by not having it wrapped up, yesterday purchased several pairs of outsize diving-boots, a marquee, a grandfather clock, a sectional greenhouse, a stuffed elephant, one hundred yards of red carpet, a gigantic crane, and six pounds of six-inch nails. Finding that he could not carry these things away, even though they were not wrapped in paper, he countermanded his orders and went home with a packet of envelopes.

Arrested for unshoeing a number of horses which did not belong to him, Charlie Suet explained that he was collecting iron to make railings for scrapheaps.

Charlie Suet was the victim of an unfortunate mistake yesterday. He was due to speak to 3000 boilermakers at Nunkinnieth on the war effort. As he stepped on to the platform his uncle handed him his speech — which turned out to be the wrong one. Charlie, noticing nothing amiss, began to read an address on bird-watching, which he was to have delivered to a boys' school at Ipswich on the following day. When exhorted to study the habits of the Lesser Beercrest, the boilermakers broke into loud and unorthodox cheering.

He has a new idea. He writes letters to all his friends in pencil, asking them to rub out what he has written and return the cards. He then writes to strangers with the same request, on the same cards. Then he hands in the cards as waste paper. " If the rubber used to rub out all the letters exchanged in a month in England," he said, " were collected afterwards, there would be enough to make tyres for 1743 army lorries."

Charlie Suet's engagement as a labourer at Durdlebury Farm terminated suddenly yesterday. He had knocked the four ploughs to pieces and put them on the village scrap-heap.

More Noise

The game of butting into radio programmes will soon produce such a roaring chaos that the listener will not know whether he is listening to a band contest in New York or an auction in Arabia. Surely science could invent some means by which the listeners themselves could join in, shouting comments, banging bits of iron, laughing, and tearing calico.

World Planning

Mrs. Cyprian Wyckett, whose Universal World Plan has caused such a sensation in planning circles, wishes me to state that her Plan is not to be confused with Mr. Leonard Boozle's Universal World Manifesto.

The former was prepared by Mrs. Wyckett's World-Group - Mind Planning Committee, the latter by Mr. Boozle's Universal World-Mind Planning Council. Though the basis of both is a synthesis of potential long-term co-ordination measures, Mrs. Wyckett stresses the need for a revision of co-operational trends, while Mr. Boozle emphasises interim short-term reconstruction by a re-statement of aims.

Wrong Face

I like very much the story of the Dutch traitor who wanted to curry favour with the Germans in his town. He saw a woman smiling in the street, walked up to her and smacked her face in the approved Herrenvolk style. She turned out to be the wife of the German commandant.

A Good Reply

I have just come across a courteous reply of the Earl of Kildare to Henry VII of England. " Why on earth did you burn down the Cathedral at Cashel ? " asked the King. " I'm sorry about it," said the Earl, " but I really thought the Archbishop was inside."

Tail-piece

" But the octopus had been roused by the approach of the diver. Eight tentacles began to weave this way and that."—(Short story.)

Forewarned is eight-armed, as the four dwarfs said when the actress tried to tip them out of her washing-tub.

The Youth of an Egg

An American, a Mr. Chuck, has decided that eggs age quickly because their shells are too thin. He therefore thickened shells by a chemical process, and patented his discovery. He now claims that inside a shell which it is almost impossible to break the egg remains young and fresh " for an indefinite period ".

His faith is beautiful — if it be faith and not a racket — but there are drawbacks in having to install a pile-driver to smash the shell of an egg. Furthermore, those with thoughtful minds may doubt whether a thick skin confers perpetual youth.

Nothing is more pathetic than an egg which refuses to grow old gracefully. Yet it occurs to me that, working on Mr. Chuck's principle, one might keep eggs young for even longer by building round them an outer shell of reinforced concrete.

Fancy That

" If you can read it and not shriek aloud, your soul is dead."—(From a book review.)

Without Comment

" By jumping to his death from the top of the world's highest building, New York's Empire State, a young man achieved the record of being the first person to fall all 86 floors to the street."—(News item.)

In Passing

I knew it would come ! Human beings having been persuaded to treat food as medicine, the experts are now turning their attention to horses. " The horse's usual diet is deficient in vitamins." All these long years the poor horses have been on the wrong " diet ". No wonder they have always been ill and miserable.

And what of mice, my braves ? Cheese is bad for them. It makes them fat. Kindly housewives are now baiting hygienic sun-traps with chemical lettuce and tasty bits of tinned wurzel. And what of the worm which the fish swallows ? Is it not deficient in carbohydrate plus rays and condaminical matter ? And would not bees be happier and slimmer and younger if they were only allowed to browse among flowers made of velvet or glass or wood ?

Absent-minded

An old native of Rhodesia has killed a hippopotamus, but does not know how it happened. That must be difficult. Have you ever broken an elephant's leg without noticing what you were doing ?

Unfortunate Occurrence

The first broadcast from seven hundred and twenty feet beneath the tomb of Tamerlane in Samarkand was inaudible, owing to the fact that Mr. Gabble got a large

piece of earth in his mouth at the start. He explained afterwards that he could have resorted to spitting, but that the sound would have been heard by the great British public, and there would have been a revolt of listeners and a consequent falling-off in licence money.

In Passing

> "A complete Bavarian village has been transplanted (to America) to give local colour."—(News item.)

Now what on earth can that mean? A Bavarian village in Bavaria gives local colour, but a Bavarian village in America can do nothing of the sort. The whole point of a Bavarian village is that it is in Bavaria. You might as well say — and you probably would, if I know you — that an American village transported to Bavaria gives local colour.

Nose-prints

I have written, I hope movingly, on the suggestion made some time ago that the prints of sheep's noses should be taken. Today there lies before me a suggestion that dogs should be honoured in the same way. The secretary of the Canine Defence League, one of whose duties is to prevent sheep from worrying dogs, was asked what he thought of the idea. He said that it might lead to the finding of many lost or stolen dogs, provided the prints were indexed. And he revealed something which is not common knowledge. *Every dog's nose-print is different.* I will warrant you cannot say the same of beetles, whose noses vary in size, but are all of the same intricate surface pattern, as was proved by Dr. Dalmetty, of Johannesburg University, in his *The Problem of the Beetle's Nose: A Study in Monotony*, which the *Northampton Courier* chose as its Book of the Week.

Cocklecarrot on the Law

A judge has at last discovered that the expression " and/or " in an affidavit makes the whole flafla meaningless. As the judge said, " It is impossible to determine what the deponent is swearing."

Mr. Justice Cocklecarrot, interviewed yesterday, said, " As a matter of fact, nothing in legal jargon means very much, except to judges and barristers and solicitors. But without the jargon the whole business would collapse. The public would realise the enormity of legal foolery, which uses words to conceal the meaning of sentences. Idiotic ceremonial also plays its part in befogging the layman. While bullying a plaintiff or defendant I often invent sonorous words and phrases with the object of mystification and intimidation."

Answers to Correspondents

EDNA.—The dark-skinned gentleman who rolled his eyes at you in the tea shop and offered to give you an elephant was probably an Indian student. There is no need to tell your mother about it. Few of these students can afford the luxury of an elephant, even for themselves.

PAULETTE.—There may be more true romance in an insurance broker who cracks his fingers than in a young la-di-da in spats.

BABS.—He probably only fans his tea with his hat because he has been told that it is not quite *comme il faut* to breathe heavily over the cup.

NITA.—When he says he is in the Household Brigade it may be his joking way of telling you that he is a butler. Anyhow, your aunt is not justified in crying over the banisters, " Where's your charger, Colonel ? "

Songs of the Moment

An actor joined the Searchlights,
But a mischief-making elf
Led him to turn, as usual,
The Searchlight on himself.

Important Announcement

The honorary secretary of the Brantwidge Girls' College Old Girls' Association asks me to say that the term " old girl " can be applied to quite young girls who have just left the college. It does not necessarily mean old girls in the academic sense, though naturally many of the girls are really old by now. In any case, the old girls who are old would rather be called old ladies for social purposes, but not old women, which suggests poverty and the lower orders, life below-stairs, charwomen's jibes, stale cabbage, area flirtations, police helmets in the larder, jug-and-bottle gaiety, cheek from the empties man, and such-like nonsense. Many an Old Brantwidgian Girl takes a pride in being called " Old Girl ", even though the term may appear comic to those whose knowledge of life is confined to the dubious glances of commercial travellers and the suggestive badinage of the tap-room.

The Corsetshire Yeomanry

" Corset Surprise. Standard Model Will Have Room For All."—(Headlines.)

Surprise is the operative word. You will see ten or twelve women inside one huge corset, worn outside their overcoats, and fastened with pearl buttons. Then there will be enormous stationary corsets at street corners, with a penny charge for admission. These will accommodate crowds of women at bus-stops.

Food

I note a tendency to talk about old food as old wine used to be talked about, and I think the cellars of the future will contain choice tinned meats, laid down by connoisseurs. I have just read a letter to a paper which says: "It is not irrelevant to recall that a tin of roast veal after 114 years' storage was found to be in perfect condition, and that carrots in a tin of the same age had retained their freshness". Bouquet would have been a better word. Where's your Haut-Brion '74 now?

There could be no better way of rounding off a selection of full-bodied tinned foods than by bringing up from the cellar some really old carrots, laboratory-bottled.

Host (holding his tinned egg up to the light): Beautiful colour! My grandfather laid down ten dozen of it.

Guest (tasting his tinned veal and rolling it round his tongue): This stands up pretty well to the carrots; quite a delicate after-taste.

Host: Do you think the sauce was corked?

Guest: Oh, no. It had merely passed its best years.

Ambassador at Bay

A diplomatic correspondent, who probably holds the Chair of Applied Psychology at Broadcasting House, has revealed that when public men are pelted with eggs and fruit it immediately increases their popularity, even more than a Gallup poll. As to the eggs, the crowds no doubt murmur between heartfelt cheers, "There goes another of those dreadful registered eggs we needn't eat, anyway."

If Lord Halifax, on a recent occasion, had wished to live up to the foreigner's idea of a true English sportsman, he would have caught each egg, crying "How's that?"

in the Trent Bridge manner. Or he might have "played" egg after egg with his hat or walking-stick. As if I cared!

Prodnose: But surely you care, just a little bit, when an Ambassador is pelted.

Myself: Frankly, no. What really rouses my interest is when the Ambassador gets in first with a few well-aimed eggs. This makes a strong impression on the people of the country. It shows he is not going to stand much nonsense—or much sense, either.

Now, had it been a certain food official, he would have poised himself like a seal, and caught each egg in his mouth, with evident relish. And after that performance a Gallup poll would have shown that 126 per cent said yes, 42 per cent said no, and 85 per cent looked through their legs backwards at the new moon.

Without Comment

"The real spiritual value of nudism lies in the fact that we have gained utter freedom from the shame complex."—(President of American Nudists.)

Mosquito Trap

A cutting reaches me which describes a new way of trapping mosquitoes, and I am asked if Dr. Strabismus (Whom God Preserve) of Utrecht managed to escape from that town. The Doctor did escape, and is now in England—but that is another story.

The trap for mosquitoes is a glass jar filled with crystals which give off hydrocyanic acid gas.

The unwary mosquito mistakes this for human breath, and wades in, having been lured to destruction by an electric light, and swept into the jar by a fan.

Even its best friends won't tell it.

Dr. Strabismus (Whom God Preserve) of Utrecht once invented a simpler trap. He had a fat human arm painted on a plain wall. Beneath this arm he would sit, holding a miniature violin and twanging a string that exactly reproduced the shrill note of the mosquito in flight. Thinking they were following their leader, the insects would make for the arm. As soon as they touched it a little bell rang, a spring was released, and a section of the wall inclined inwards, precipitating the little beasts into a small bath of marine glue.

Lost Opportunity

A man who was scratched by a tiger in the north of England was told that " In rainy weather this tiger gets fiercer, and you should have kept further off." What a chance for the magistrate to say, " It never rains but it paws." (Laughter.)

Borax

It is the sight of gigantic strings of figures which impresses the public.

If Borax says that an industrial area was bombed, and 18 acres devastated, nobody takes much notice. But when Borax says that three months of bombing have lost to the enemy 381,947,648 man-hours, then we know where we are — or we think we do, which is what counts. The man-hour trick is one of the best yet discovered. Nobody can check the figures, because they are purely imaginary, and have all the attraction of poetry. The last two years of bombing Germany mean, in man-hours, that 7,506,348 men have been permanently out of work for five years. If this can be kept up, nobody will have done a stroke of work in Germany for at least a decade.

Bigamy

The announcement that "a wave of deliberate bigamy is sweeping the country" reminds me that when things get to a certain stage of effrontery, men propose to two or three girls at the same time — "Will you three marry me?" One result of bigamy is a slight alteration in music-hall jokes about mothers-in-law. Imagine the fun a comedian can make out of six or seven mothers-in-law in the house. Imagine, too, the cry of an exasperated husband, "Oh, go back to your mothers — all of you!"

Are we in for an era of harems in Sydenham and Brixton, veiled women at lattices, and Mr. Thompson entering the back parlour (temporarily converted into a seraglio) and throwing his handkerchief to the favourite?

Bigamy will mean the yashmak and the scarlet-heeled shoes, and the chance for Mrs. Wivens to be the Rose of Stamboul or the Lily of Bagdad.

The Wrong Idea

The other day at Brighton a man bounced out from an alley, on all-fours, and bit another man in the trouser-leg. He explained afterwards that "It was a case of mistaken identity, and the whole thing was a joke." When asked what kind of a joke, he replied, "It is a family joke. We have done it for ages. It does no harm." The victim said, "Dogs are bad enough, but if men are going on like this, where are we?"

It was then humorously suggested that the joker might have delivered a warning bark. "That's not the idea of it at all," replied the joker angrily.

I should say so

DEAR SIR,—There must be many Germans who do not yet know of the famous reassurances given from time

to time to those of them who feared some kind of offensive action on our part. Would it not be good propaganda to broadcast to them, and thus turn them against Hitler by our outspoken honesty? If they know that they will have a breathing-space until, say, 1995, they will soon rally to our cause.

Nonsense

Mr. Bernard Shaw, in a discussion on Handel's "Messiah", said that he has no objection to a masterpiece being changed and adapted to new conditions, provided the changes are made by a master hand. "Genius alone has the right to tamper with genius."

It is a dangerous theory, particularly when Mr. Shaw imagines Mr. Augustus John "Touching up a Goya". It is also a ludicrous theory, and makes nonsense of all creative art.

But there is another point. Today it is the fashion, in music at any rate, for anybody who comes along to play the fool with a work. If you complain that some debased parody of a piece of music has been broadcast, people say, "Ah, but the public might never have heard it at all." The answer is that they haven't heard it. They have merely heard something that degrades it and makes fun of it.

Tck, tck!

"None of the costumes had arrived in time. There was only a small box of beards."
—(News Item.)

If the play was all about a number of bearded men, no harm done. But if it was a sentimental comedy, you could not have everybody in a false beard — at least, not the ingénue.

Marginal Note

The rescued philosopher Croce said one good thing about poetry which is very much to the point today. He

said that a man who does not understand poetry will admire all kinds of qualities in what masquerades as poetry — wit, wisdom, and so on. This man is wrong, not because he admires these qualities but because he imagines that he is admiring poetry.

III

MRS. WRETCH AND THE CIRCUS

Fun at Wretch Manor

MRS. WRETCH writes to me: "Noticing the name of Wugwell's Circus in your column, I recalled my early days with that excellent show, before I married the Colonel. Only the other day we received a visit from the Human Snake (a Mr. Ernest Parblow). I had no time to explain who he was to my husband, and you may imagine the Colonel's surprise when, in the midst of a discussion on Colonial policy, Mr. Parblow, in sheer good nature, began to twist himself round his chair, with his legs round his neck. 'My dear sir,' said the Colonel, 'are you unwell?' For answer Mr. Parblow turned his head back to front and tied himself round a side-table. 'It's a fit, a seizure, a stroke,' said my husband. 'Call Dr. Cricklade.' But I disabused him, and he tried to enter into the joke — rather awkwardly, I fear. He said he thought it all rather pointless and in very bad taste."

Ordeal by Beard

Colonel Wretch was reading his correspondence yesterday in his study at Wretch Manor, when a lady with a massive black beard beckoned him on to the lawn. Somewhat startled, he went out to investigate. "I come to plead with you," said the lady, "for the return of your wife for a week or two. Wugwell's Circus needs her." The Colonel, who had never spoken to a bearded lady before, was highly embarrassed. "My dear sir — er — madam," he said, "it is out of the question. Those days are over." Whereupon the lady began to cry, and the Colonel found himself saying "There, there, now," and

offering his handkerchief. At this moment the wife of the Lord Lieutenant of the County strolled up the drive and stopped in amazement at what she saw. By the afternoon it was all over the neighbourhood that Colonel Wretch had a bearded lady in his life.

Lady Grimwaters to Colonel Wretch

MY DEAR NEPHEW,—One hopes that what one hears about you and a certain bearded lady is but idle gossip. You may remember that when you were injudicious enough to woo your circus wife, both I and your uncle warned you that her old friends of the ring might cause you considerable embarrassment. But neither of us suspected that you would be careless enough to get your name coupled with a grotesque performer, who, I understand, has no talent but the unenviable ability to grow a beard at will. Pray write to me to reassure me. There has, as you know, been no scandal in our family since your great-aunt Euphemia ran away with the Italian glass-blower. And you know how that turned out.—Your fond aunt, HORTENSE.

Mrs. Wretch to Mr. Wugwell

DEAR HILDEBRAND,—Over and over again I have told you that my circus life ended when I married Colonel Wretch. Your repeated efforts to persuade me to return, even temporarily, are an embarrassment to me in my social activities, as some of my committees think I am not wholly serious-minded. One lady has got hold of a picture of me standing on your shoulders and enticing a large ape to drink from a beer-bottle. Imagine the effect of that coming into the middle of an appeal for women ambassadors. Furthermore, it is impossible to explain away to my husband the no doubt well-meant incursions of my erstwhile companions. If Anselmo must pay a call, need he run barking between the vicar's legs? Don't ask me to

make a " come-back " any more. La belle Zaboula must be but a memory.—Yrs. sincerely, UTTA WRETCH.

From Mr. Wugwell to Colonel Wretch

. . . If the exquisite mountain who is now your missus will not come to her old pal Mahomet H. Wugwell, what about me coming to the mountain ? In other words, old boy, if my eloquence can turn the scale, will you abide by your wife's verdict, and take your beating like the bold old Corinthian you are ? Failing that, what about you lending the grounds of Wretch Manor for a few performances ? Nothing knocks the public like a dash of circusdom in a truly rural setting. And we could give one day's proceeds to your local Fish Zoning Week. I await your reply before coming to pay a formal call. I may say I've asked Madame Goulash (she of the sweeping beard) to lay off you. . . .

Colonel Wretch to Mr. Wugwell

. . . You do not understand. The world in which my wife now moves is never brought into contact with people who do aerobatics on horses or intercept seals' food. She is called upon to meet people who do not know that such things go on, and, when they are told of it, either close their eyes to it, or write letters to the papers to get it stopped. Five centuries of settled life have perhaps given me an excessive aversion from the haphazard existence of the circus ring. I can never forget, moreover, that an uncle of mine had a boyish passion for a knife-thrower's colleague, and got two wicked-looking knives in the leg one Michaelmas Day at Chichester. . . .

From Mr. Wugwell to Colonel Wretch

SIR,—While fully appreciating your hesitation in being asked to release your missus for her old equestrian act, I

must point out that an honoured member of our troupe, Mimosa Mamie, Queen of the Tightrope, is, in her more private capacity, the wife of a respected chiropodist of Bury St. Edmunds, who is also on the local Conservative Club catering committee. Nor would your missus be asked to perform anything derogatory of her county position, such as throwing fish to the seals. All we ask is that she should make three tours of the ring, standing with one leg on the back of Wandering Willie and the other on the back of Bangor Bucks, ending with a leap into the arms of the clown, Romulus, who squirts her with soda water and kisses her cheek loudly.—Yrs. obediently, HILDEBRAND WUGWELL.

Colonel Wretch to Mr. Wugwell

DEAR MR. WUGWELL,—Does it not occur to you that, for the kind of thing you have in mind, my wife is rather out of practice? When she rides, she does not ride two horses at once, with one leg on the back of each, nor do the responsibilities of her position as my wife include leaps into the arms of clowns, to be followed, as I understand from your missive, by an exchange of noisy kisses and horseplay with soda-siphons. I must also ask you not to send emissaries to my home. Yesterday, as I was discussing a local matter with our vicar, a pygmy came up the avenue on a huge tricycle. He announced in a loud voice that he was the Whirling Midget, Anselmo Amantinelli. And he crawled between the vicar's legs and barked. Forgive me for not finding this very edifying.—Yours truly, ARTHUR WRETCH.

Mr. Wugwell to Colonel Wretch

. . . Suppose we were to cut out the clown's kisses and the soda-water squirting, would you let your missus ride the two gees? Or, failing that, what would be your reactions to her appearance in sequins on the back of Monty the seal, the idea being that she beats him to the

food flung from the audience? Or is that too comic for a county bigwig? After all, this holiday circus is as much part of the war effort as motoring about inspecting rabbit-clubs or whatever it is she does. Mine is the hand that fed her in the old days, and are you going to join her in biting it now, just because I'm not a member of your hunt? As man to man, what about it, Colonel? . .

From Halma the Wizard to Colonel Wretch

SIR,—Perhaps you would let your old woman, who was erstwhile one of us, officiate as the girl who whisks the yellow handkerchief off the goldfish bowl when I shoot at the footlights. She would wear a startling costume, and would also cry "Hup" in a musical contralto when I throw her my mortar-board. My act is altogether more refined than most of the others in our show, and I'm sure you would not consider it beneath your old bag of mischief's dignity to assist me, especially as I once had the honour of being in the same human pyramid with her in a set-piece at Gosport. I enclose photo. She is the lady whose left foot reposes on my forehead.—Yrs. to a T, FRED HALMA.

Mr. Wugwell to Colonel Wretch

. . . Your letter gave me an idea. Why should not you and your missus appear together? You could take the place of the clown who is to catch her as she jumps from the two horses. It would look very gallant, and you need not squirt her with soda-water. Just a gag or two. Or perhaps you might produce an egg from her ear. We would bill the pair of you as Colonel Bonzo and La Belle Zaboula, or something of that sort. Nobody need recognise you, as we would make you up as a Cossack with red whiskers and a large spade-shaped beard. What do you say to it? If it appeals to you, as a horsy man, meaning no offence, just let me know. . .

Colonel Wretch to Colonel Wugwell

SIR,—You will oblige me by not billing me as Colonel Bonzo or Colonel anything else. In the hope of ending this correspondence, I will state bluntly that neither my wife nor I have any intention of joining your circus even temporarily. You will also oblige me by requesting a certain bearded lady not to call upon me any more, as her presence during the absence of Mrs. Wretch might be misconstrued. I return her portrait which she left in my study. May we now regard this whole incident as closed? —Yrs. faithfully, ARTHUR WRETCH.

The Wretch Controversy

From Poffleton, Nubney, and Poffleton to Mr. Hildebrand Wugwell:

". . . The attention of our client, Colonel Wretch, having been drawn to Hercules the Mighty, who entered Wretch Manor and tore through two telephone directories and a pack of playing cards on the afternoon of April 4, and did then proceed to bite through a chandelier with his naked teeth, crying 'How's that for fitness?' our client has instructed us to ask you how much you will take to call off the said performer, together with the Six Lobelias, the Snake Man, Romulus the Clown, a Bearded Lady known as Rita, a pygmy tricyclist, Halma the Wizard, Nibby and Mibby, Vadko, Gertie the Hussar, and other members of your troupe. . . ."

Mr. Wugwell to Poffleton, etc.

. . . You may tell your client to keep his dough. He can't crawl out of the matter like that. The soil of England belongs to the English, whose heritage is freedom. Tell him that. And if one of you Nubneys is the Nubney that got me refused damages when our Red Indian Chieftain

Chaggawagga broke his nose on a lamp-standard in Cogswade High Street on the night of the fire, then all I can say is I want no Nubney, and no Poffleton either, shoving his finger into my pie. This may not be the language of the Law of Torts, but it's my way of telling your so-called client that he can't intimulate me by throwing me to a lot of wild beasts in wigs. So if you want me to sue you for annoyance, send me another letter like the last, and I'll get it published in the paper, if I have to give the editor two passes for the five-and-sixpennies when we open at Cheltenham.

How to Prophesy

By my grandmother's helmet, the oracle has worked. For many a day I have said to a wise man, " When will it rain ? " and he has answered, finger to nose and eye cunningly shut, " Today." And after forty thousand consultations it has rained. " I told you so," says he. Beshrew me ! Cram me with eels ! I will swear there is packed into him all the wisdom of the Pythoness above her steaming chasm at Delphi, and of the Sage of Dodona, of Cilician Mopsus, of the Pataran priestess, of the invisible voices of Delos and Patras, of Orpheus in Mitylene and Trophonius in Cos.

But to sell his wares he should sit in a tent with stars and crescents and rams' heads and fish and goats embroidered all over it. And he should dress himself in an Arabian dressing-gown and a pointed hat, and gaze into a crystal, crying " I see rain," in the manner of Mme. de Rulotte, the witch, when she looked into her coffee-cup and said to the assembled dolts, " I see — I see chicory."

See how vastly superior is this sage and prophet of mine to your dribbling herd of prophetasters, prophetlings,

prophetlets, and twopenny seers. For this man said for weeks. " It will rain." And at last it did rain. But the nasty crew of writers and intellectuals have been saying this or that for decades — and they are always wrong. And I now beg them, before thirty-five wagon-loads of devils run away with them, to limit their foamings to simple, everyday affairs. Let them say, " The sun will come out," or " There will be fog," or " A wind is coming." Then they will occasionally pull it off. If they cannot do this, let them cease their chatter, and leave honest men to drink in peace.

The Perils of Repose

" If a reduction of homework leads merely to more lounging, it will be wasted."—(Leading article.)

Yes. It is deplorable to see children having fun instead of cramming their poor little heads with what the Board of Education considers to be useful information. In these days of earnest endeavour there is something shameful in the spectacle of a boy or girl just doing nothing. " The daydream ", as Mrs. Wretch has well said, " is the curse of childhood, and reverie is shameful cowardice."

For my part, whenever I see a baby sleeping peacefully in its perambulator, I am filled with horror at such waste of time. It is never too early to start on the road to prigdom and insufferable self-righteousness.

An English Film

" How would you define an English film ? "
—(Letter to paper.)

Oh, I can answer that. It is a film written by an American, made by an American company, produced by a Russian, directed by a Frenchman, with music by an

American and additional dialogue by an American, and photographed by a German. It is called an English film because the money for it is put up by a Hungarian and all the actors and actresses are American.

Without Comment

"WANTED. — Several plain net threaders, over 18 years of age, good chances of promotion into machines."—(Advertisement.)

Art

"One of the portraits in the exhibition was painted (no brush being handy) with a spoon."—(Art criticism.)

Faugh! Anything serves. Why be hidebound and old-fashioned? I know a man who fills his hat with paint and flings it at the canvas, roaring with laughter as he does so.

Enterprising

"He has a great scientific curiosity . . . once when he wanted to move a greenhouse out of the way, sooner than have it dismantled he blew it up." — (News item.)

Non-resident

In a recent case the judge found difficulty in making up his mind whether a bug found in an hotel was resident or non-resident. This reminds me of the story of Daniel. The King visited him in the morning, after his first night in the lions' den.

"How did you sleep, Daniel?" queried the affable monarch.

"Not too badly, your majesty," replied the harassed prophet, "except that I was a little troubled by lions."

The royal host looked offended.

" All I can say is," he grumbled, " that you must have brought them yourself."

Sixty Horses wedged in Chimney

The story to fit this sensational headline has not turned up yet.

Hogwasch

The demand for educational films in L.C.C. schools led some time ago to a conference of teachers and big film producers. Mr. Sol Hogwasch was asked to prepare an educational film about Warren Hastings, to show the greatness of England. He had no idea what the Warren part of it meant, so he made a film of the famous seaside place, in which a bathing beauty dreamed that she was mixed up in the battle of Hastings, and led the final charge which routed the Normans and laid the foundations of Anglo-Saxon power.

The film was rejected by an astonished audience of experts.

Hogwasch was next asked to make a film about the Boxer Riots. The result was the thrilling story of a famous heavy-weight boxer whose trainer double-crossed him. The heavy-weight organised riots on the night of his next big fight. When Hogwasch was told that the picture should have been about China, he said, " Who ever heard of a Chinese boxer ? "

At Long Last

A man aged 109 has climbed a twelve-thousand-foot mountain in Japan. If it be asked why so old a man climbed so high a mountain, we who are the heirs of democracy must reply that it was probably a case of now

or never. He knew, deep down in his heart, that he would not live very much longer, and that if the mountain was to be climbed at all, there was no time to lose.

Why had he not climbed it before? He was waiting. That was it. He was waiting.

I Say! I Mean!

> "The chicken house has four storeys, and is equipped with lifts, electric light, running water, and scientific ventilation.—(News item.)

What, no garage?

Bloggo

> "In an ordinary well-set-up man the capillaries, set end to end, would circle the earth two and a half times."—(Professor WINIFRED CULLIS, lecturing to the B.M.A.)

It is not generally realised that many a timid, shy, shamefaced man is suffering from the knowledge that his capillaries, set end to end, would only circle the earth one and five-eighth times. Such knowledge gives one a sense of inferiority.

"Why is Sir Arthur looking so gloomy, Sir Harry?"

"Poor devil! It's like this, Sir George. [Lowers voice.] His capillaries, set end to end, wouldn't circle the earth more than once."

"Phugh! That's dreadful, Sir Harry. Poor blighter! Is there no hope?"

"Oh, yes, Sir George: BLOGGO. A year ago my capillaries, set end to end, would barely have reached China. Today they would circle the earth three times. But where are you dashing off to, Sir George?"

" I'm going to buy some BLOGGO for Sir Arthur, Sir Harry."

" Good man, Sir George."

Lipton's Elm

There is once again much talk of cutting down the famous elm tree at Chalfont St. Giles, under which, an American correspondent tells me, Lipton wrote the *Faery Queen*. It was, of course, in this village that Milton used to sail his yacht *Victory*.

It is a fine old elm, and worthy to rank with the Oak of Tasso, which you pass on your way up to the Church of St. Peter on the Hill of the Sands of Gold in Rome. Tasso's wife, Mme. Tasso, invented waxworks, my American correspondent tells me.

Other famous trees are Beerbohm and the genealogical tree under which Galsworthy used to write.

For more about trees, how to grow them and what to do when they are grown, see the admirable little brochure by the Abbess of Chuchunolles-les-Bringueilles, *Les Arbres de Ma Vie* (Mirschauer et Bolquette, Avenue Hoche, 37. 124 fr.).

Aux Quais

I see that Mr. H. L. Mencken is still fussing about the origin of " O.K." The most ridiculous theories are advanced, but not the simplest, which, as I have pointed out before, is the right one. In the American War of Independence French sailors who made appointments with girls used to say, " Aux quais." That is the solution of the whole baffling mystery. There is no need to go into Choctaw words, or to talk of " the initials of Obadiah Kelly ".

The Fun of Opera

Here is good news. A German has written an opera in which there is very little music. I presume that the opera

will be full of recitative — that admirable habit of muttering in a dramatic monotone. My favourite form of recitative is the " aside ", in which the singer moves towards the wings, murmuring as he goes. The audience think he is saying " Roberto shall not know that I suspect ", or " See how the lovely Mariella smiles upon him ". What he is really saying is " Look here, Charley, keep Tino away from that quart jug till I come off."

Glowworm versus Orchestra

Sir James Jeans has revealed a too little known fact. It is this. The energy expended by the whole Queen's Hall Orchestra is less than that expended by a glowworm which is in the act of glowing. The layman, unless he is lucky enough to find himself a guest under the same roof as a glowworm and the whole of the Queen's Hall Orchestra, has to take such pronouncements for granted. What is easier to demonstrate is that the glowworm cannot play Wagner. The only reason I bother to mention this is because it helps to fill up space.

Sir James spoke of a time when people will be able to produce " all the energy they want by some electrical device, and will look back on these days as benighted, when they had to have 100 people in white shirts to do it ".

The suggestion that music is a mere matter of amperage, and that any other expenditure of energy would do as well, has the charm of novelty.

Without Comment

I have been sent a description of falling in love which appears in an American paper. It is " More wonderful than listening to a Wagnerian love-song by moonlight in an airplane over Miami ".

Cold Hat for Two, Waiter

" If he failed, he said, he would eat his hat. He failed, and ate his hat in public. Police were required to regulate the crowds." —(News item.)

One half of the world does not know how the other half lives.

Bravo, Stankovitch

" Jovan Stankovitch fought the four of them, took their guns from them and broke them across his knee."—(News item.)

That's the stuff! And you don't do that kind of thing on nut cutlets. Did he break the guns one by one, or in a single batch? It brings back my youth to read of these things. It is exactly how I used to behave.

Truth in Advertising

I rubbed my eyes when I read in a publisher's announcement, " Though not a great book it is certainly a good one ". This was not a critic's opinion, but the pronouncement of the publisher himself.

Perhaps we are in for a bout of modesty and truth telling in that sty which women writers please to call the literary world.

MR. GOBBE writes : " This worthless book places Miss Drain at one bound in the rear rank of living novelists ".

MISS GUFF writes : " When once you have taken it up you put it down with a bang as though it were a poisonous snake ".

H. D. FUDGE says : " I read it from the first page to the second. Then I was violently sick ".

" Not in the least vital, human, or tremendous. Just one

more piece of pretentious balderdash."—(C. R. TIDDLER in *The Morgue.*)

" Seldom if ever have I been so revolted by claptrap." —(GLADYS SLIPPER in *The Mausoleum.*)

Something Wrong

" She wore a beige waistcoat, knee-length, with tiny tassels of indiarubber hanging all over it. The top of the waistcoat was torn, and beneath it showed a second. That also was torn, and beneath it showed a third. The third was even more torn, and revealed a fourth. The fourth revealed a fifth, the fifth a sixth, the sixth a seventh, the seventh an eighth, the eighth a ninth, the ninth a tenth, and so on up to twenty-four. The twenty-fourth was torn so badly that it hung in tatters, and beneath it was a silk running-vest, reaching to the ankles, and engraved with her initials, " M. T. H." The ends were tucked into enormous boots made of glass."—(*Woman's Parliament.*)

Memories

Hearing a man boast that there was no mountain road in Europe that had not been conquered by the motor-car, I had great pleasure in giving him the lie. No motor-car has yet managed the famous road up the Flaamsdal to Myrdal in Norway. I have walked it on a very hot summer's day. There are twenty hairpin bends, and at the top there is an hotel where they sell real beer, and not the beastly teetotaller's beer which is all you can get in many of the valleys.

I don't know that a motor-car has ever been to the top of the Stelvio. That, too, I have done on foot. It is nearly ten thousand feet high, and ends with what seems like at least a thousand hairpin bends. It is the highest mountain road in Europe.

And now I shall sing that lovely song called " Ung-

birken", which Grieg set to music. I know it is the fashion to decry Grieg today, but that is because he wrote melodious stuff, and because, when he orchestrated a piece of music, he omitted the pile-driver part and forgot to include a passage, in the development of the theme, for six electric saws.

Grieg was born in Bergen, and, like Sinding, founded his style on the old folk-music of Norway. Had I not already promised to sing a song, I would now dance for you the Halling and the Gangar, as they are danced in many a lonely *seter*.

Interlude

Prodnose: This is all very dull.

Myself: When is a door not a door?

Prodnose: Well, when?

Myself: When it's a-jar.

Prodnose: How can a door be a jar?

Myself: A-jar; slightly open. A-hyphen-jar.

Prodnose: Oh! ah! ha! ha! ha! ha! I see. Oh, that's awfully neat. Now that's what I like in your column.

Madrigal

Oh, fair is the wild hedge-rose that blooms so red,
Breathing its sweetness upon the summer air,
And red are Professor Laski and Mr. Gollancz,
But not so fair.

The Singing Mouse

The achievements of science in this present age were never demonstrated more remarkably than when it was decided that an English singing mouse should broadcast to the United States. Nothing will do more to break down the barriers of distrust and ignorance between mouse and mouse, and to bring nearer the international brotherhood of mice.

One who heard the English mouse at the audition was so carried away that a slight exaggeration is pardonable. She — an American wireless official — said, " He is more tuneful than a nightingale, and although I am an American, I am ready to back him against his American rival ". There's true sportsmanship for you, which knows no frontiers. A singing mouse is a citizen of the world.

As Matthew Arnold wrote :

> Hark ! Ah, the mouse,
> The tawny-throated !
> Hark ! from that moonlit radio what a burst !
> What triumph ! Hark — what pain !

Motto for a Fish

> Each on his own strict line we move,
> And some find death ere they find love.
>
> (MATTHEW ARNOLD.)

Sensitive Lady Cabstanleigh

" Big, but not beautiful." In these words a cricketer describes the Melbourne ground. Lady Cabstanleigh is bringing an action for libel, alleging that the words might be taken to refer to her.

Symbolism

" In the latter the great seduction scene to which the whole film rises is symbolised by a view of a bedroom window through which are thrown a blazing pine tree, an enormous plow, an Archbishop, a giraffe, and a cloud of feathers."—(Description of play.)

Hogwasch

Glamour was a meaningless sobriquet until radiant Natacha Deauville swam into the cinegoer's ken. This

twentieth-century Coleoptera, dusky, svelt, and enluring, will be destined to draw all who care for integral artistry. Her first vehicle is a picturisation of that ancient Greek epoch which has made the name of Homer a household word for thousands of decades. Natacha plays the lonesome wife of Olysses, besetted by Sutures on the distant island of Ittica, and does she play it! In one scene 20,000 apes are let loose. There is a temple covering forty-two acres, with an organ with 9000 miles of pipes. In this film we are not merely reviving history, we are making it.

I gather from the above communication, sent out by Sol Hogwasch, that he has discovered a new star.

Parlour Gestapo

"Parsons and psychologists", I read, "have got together to form a Marriage Guidance Council." The idea is to have "a panel of experts to lecture and advise up and down the country". What fun! I like particularly the word "experts", which now covers about three-quarters of the population of England, and includes anyone who is either an amateur or a professional meddler. But before the last shreds of privacy and independence are torn from the poor, I have a suggestion to make. Why not let this "panel of experts" join forces with the mass-observation spies? The spies could collect millions of footling facts for the panel to work on. Every young couple in love or engaged to be married ought to be accompanied on all occasions by a uniformed psychologist and an official lecturer.

"*The Only Soap for Cows.*"—(Prominent Farmer)

Tomorrow I launch my new soap, Flor de Azores, for washing cows. It is all part of the Cleaner Milk Campaign. It will also wash grass, for if cows eat grass that is blackened

with smuts and cinders from railway engines, their milk will tend to be black.

Cows washed with my soap will give cleaner milk. At least that is my story, and I shall stick to it until all the fools who have put their money into it come to their senses and withdraw.

If only we can get cleaner milk we needn't botulise or demogrifise it.

From the Cows to the People. Hot from the Bucket! Do It Now! Support Belted Herefords!

Worth Remembering

A reply of Mr. Churchill in the House to a particular question might be given a wider application, as an answer to the people who waste their time in whining and grizzling about the boredom of radio. Mr. Churchill was asked for "an assurance that we shall not have to listen to the Italian National Anthem on the Nine-o'clock News", and he replied, "There is no obligation to listen to the Nine-o'clock News." Many people seem to forget that, at present, listening to the B.B.C. is not compulsory. Good-day to those of you who have faces like the backs of cabs.

For the Welsh

Brachipwllogoch Llantisivery cwm cwm! The Welsh Eisteddfod has been held after all, as sure as my bardic name is Gwilp. But it was not the usual uplifting spectacle, with Druid nightshirts to the fore and beards flowing like champagne. The adjudications were made, and we awaited with breath, as it were, baited, the announcement of the names of the winners. Archdruid by name and archdruid

by nature, as Mrs. Llwilliams said to the saucy old bard who encircled her mammoth waist with venturesome arm during the singing of " The Girls of Flint "

Corchardt is coming

I learn that Mr. Otto Corchardt, jun. — Otto Corchardt, the great technocraftician and ensemblist — is coming to England to give pantomime producers the benefit of his ultra-modern theories of mass production, choreography, lighting, heating, and percussionistic extra-expressionism (all change for Teasingbridge, Slopcorner, Rott, and Gastible).

Corchardt is a great believer in the use of coloured glass hats, to express the clarity of visions, and as he regards fairies as a subjective throw-off of the secondary mind in sleep, he proposes to dress them in glass hats.

" To me," he said recently, " glass is a symbol of earth-fruition through the medium of elementals. That is why we can look clean through a window without being on the other side of it."

By Carrier

I read of a Burmese who " used to carry the wives of missionaries up the steep jungle paths when they came to join their husbands ". Sometimes, no doubt, he got them mixed up. He would drop a lady in a doorway, crying laconically, " Mrs. Wowster, Big Chief." Whereupon the embarrassed Mr. Blood, who had been expecting his wife, would prod the recumbent form, saying, " My dear lady, this is *most* awkward. Pray get up. This man must carry you back again. There is some mistake. Big piece white Ma no belong here. Get her out ! " Meanwhile Mr. Wowster has received a similar package from another bearer, and has rushed forward crying, " My dear Angela ! " But in the midst of his embrace he has taken a whang on the mazzard that would have felled a bison. " Don't *touch*

me ! " shrieks Mrs. Blood, whose nerves are all to bits. And so the long day wears on. (Ring up Carter Patterson.)

Foulenough Double-crossed !

" Sigh no more, ladies.
Men were receivers ever."

Captain Foulenough made a haul of one hundred and sixty-three tins of medicated turnips at a country house two days ago, and unloaded them on to a well-known receiver of stolen goods at a decent profit. Boubou Flaring, who is " in " with a genuine black-market man, blabbed, with the result that Foulenough had to leave hurriedly for Swindon, wearing a red beard, and calling himself Archdeacon Kittihawke.

It leaves Me cold

What could be simpler ? By photographing an asteroid fifteen miles in diameter at a moment when it was 16,200,000 miles from the earth, it was ascertained that the sun is 93,005,000 miles from the earth, instead of, as was previously stated, 92,900,000.

Those who have been conducting their lives on the facile assumption that they were 92,900,000 miles from the sun now have to adjust themselves to this new discovery. For myself, I have hardly turned a hair. And for all I saw of the sun recently, it might have been even 93,734,826 miles away.

IV

'NEATH TIBETAN SKIES

SOME of my readers may remember the amazing story I once published of Colonel Egham's quest of the Sapphire Girdle of the Queen of Sheba, at that time the property of an " exotic queen ", as the Colonel described her, called Dingi-Poos.

As one critic said : " The story reeks of old Tibet ". Times have changed. Colonel Egham, in 1942, was doing secret-service work in Afghanistan, and Dingi-Poos was reputed to be the centre of German activities in Tibet. I now have to tell how Egham was ordered to break up this spy ring. This story, too, reeks of old Tibet.

I

It was with a fluttering of the heart that Colonel Egham once more set foot on Tibetan soil, and recalled his strange wooing of the dusky beauty, Dingi-Poos. On a moonless winter's evening the Colonel rode his yak up the main street of Dung, and dismounted outside the " Lama's Arms ", where the brick tea and rancid butter were reputed to be less nauseating than at the " Yak-Drivers " further up the street. The Colonel, who was disguised as a Swedish botanist named Bunsen, was shown to his corner — three square feet of dried mud in a dark yard — by the squinting landlord, and before he had unpacked his *Wild Flowers of Tibet* it was known throughout Dung that a stranger had arrived. Dingi-Poos, who was sipping brick tea through a straw with Kurt von Kalbsfleisch, smiled sardonically to herself.

II

" I shall twist this Swedish botanist round my little finger," said Dingi-Poos.

" There are no flies on you," retorted Kalbsfleisch, " or not many," he added, flipping a brace of bluebottles off her amply-powdered nose.

Between them, on a bamboo table inlaid with lacquer spots, lay a map of India, with all the names in Japanese.

" More brick-tea ? " inquired the beautiful adventuress.

Kalbsfleisch shook his head violently. He felt that he had drunk about five gallons of dirty rain-water.

" You grow more lovely every day," he said.

" Can it," vouchsafed the regal beauty, with considerable hauteur.

" Can it what ? " asked the slow-witted Teuton, grinning sheepishly.

III

On the morning after his arrival in Dung, Colonel Egham received a heavily-scented note from Dingi-Poos, asking him to a *brick-thé dansant* at her summer residence. Guessing that he was to be " sounded ", and that he would probably meet the chief German spies, Egham took special care to label himself as a botanist. He plastered his clothes with mud, pasted a rhododendron leaf on the back of his coat, and allowed a copy of *Wild Flowers of Tibet* to stick out of his pocket. With thick blue glasses and a red wig his disguise was complete. He also put into his pocket a number of picture-postcards of the red beeches (*Fagus sylvatica*) of Hastholmen, and the great woods of the Kinnekulle. And at four o'clock he once more stood in the presence of that beautiful woman who had made such a fool of him in the old days. Advancing with the botanist's cautious approach, he bent low over her exquisite hand and touched it with his lips. As he raised his head he saw that she had not recognised him.

IV

One by one Egham was introduced to the other guests — mostly Germans and their wives. They all flattered

Sweden grossly, and Kurt von Kalbsfleisch asked what he thought of England. Egham had learned his lesson. " It is a Jewish plutocracy," he said, " doomed to destruction. Heil Hitler." The Germans beamed. " Then you are with us ? " asked von Knückelduster. " To the death," said Egham. Dingi-Poos smiled an enigmatic smile, and Egham felt the spell of her beauty stealing over him again. As he danced with her she said, " An Englishman once paid court to me." " The swine ! " murmured Egham. " He was a fool," she said. " The only Englishman who ever attracted me was a journalist. Oh, he was tall and handsome as a god. But he spurned me. His name was Beachcomber. That is why I hate the English." The lilt of the Tibetan valse intoxicated Egham. " I love Swedes," said Dingi-Poos. " Done in butter, with——" began Egham, and then recollected himself.

V

Dingi-Poos reclined on a Chinese sofa. The shaded lamp at her side enhanced the unspeakable beauty of her face. She was dressed in a simple clinging robe of clocheted passementerie, looped at the wrists with organdie ruchings, and caught up at the waist with a puffed vieux-rose girdle, with lamé borders and cross-stitches of velvet. The revers of this robe were of gusseted filigree, and upon her shining dark hair was a fillet of silken rose-petals. Her voice was low and vibrant like the drums of destiny. Egham's head reeled as he drowned himself in her limpid eyes. " Everywhere," she said, " Germany is winning. We are in Moscow and Leningrad. The English are out of Africa. The Americans cannot hold the Japanese." Blinding himself to her beauty, Egham said, " That's not the latest news, my lady." " Is there better ? " she asked. " Read these," said Egham, passing her a bundle of English newspapers. As she read, she changed colour. Egham longed to comfort her. Presently she uttered a cry of pain, like a

stricken beast. " They have deceived me," she hissed between her dazzling teeth.

VI

" How do I know," asked Dingi-Poos, " that what you tell me is true ? " " An Englishman," said Egham, tugging off his wig, " never deceives a lady." The adventuress uttered a pretty scream. To calm her (partly), Egham hugged her and breathed his real name into her alabaster ear, " Colonel, Colonel," she said, fondling the lapel of his coat, " how rash of you to thrust your nose into this hornets' nest. But since things are so, I am on your side. And here is my foolish old lover to help me to my revenge." Whereupon she laughed until tears of mirth sluiced the muck from her eyelids. " Kiss me ! " roared the warrior, well-nigh maddened by her beauty. " Not now, foolish one," replied the Tibetan belle with a moue. " This is no hour for horseplay or yakplay, rather, as we call it. Hist ! Here come our enemies." And as the Germans entered they heard Egham say, " I shall send whatever plants I find to our beloved Fuehrer." But he had forgotten to replace his wig !

VII

Seeing Colonel Egham clutching a red wig, the Germans raised their eyebrows in surprise. " Herr Bunsen," said von Knückelduster, narrowing his bloodshot eyes, " why does a Swedish botanist wear a wig ? " Egham thought quickly. He said, " To avoid the keen eyes of Anglo-Saxon spies." That satisfied the Germans. " We have further good news, which you may like to transmit to your friends in Sweden," said von Kalbsfleisch. " We are in complete command of the Caucasus oil-fields, and advancing on all fronts. London is in ruins, and all the English war factories are either destroyed or working

only at half pressure." " Marvellous," said Dingi-Poos in a voice like a snake with a bilious attack. " Since you are one of us," he continued, " you might like to know something of our plans for a conquest of India." From a capacious wallet he drew a map. And at that moment, pulling out his handkerchief, Egham let fall to the floor a picture-postcard of Weston-super-Mare !

VIII

There was an ominous silence while the Germans stared at the fallen postcard. Then Guttlinger said, " Why does a Swedish botanist carry English postcards ? " His voice was hard and menacing. " Same reason as for the wig," retorted Egham airily. " To deceive Anglo-Saxon spies." " My dear Herr Bunsen," said von Knückelduster, " there are no spies here, I assure you." " One cannot be too careful," interposed Dingi-Poos. " And who is Aunt Agnes, who, I see, signs this card, and speaks of your home in England ? " asked Guttlinger, studying the card. " Aunt Agnes," said Egham, " is a Swedish friend of mine who is co-operating from England. The idea was that if an English agent got hold of this card, he would think I was an Englishman." " Is she beautiful, this Swedish ' Aunt Agnes ' of yours ? " asked Dingi-Poos, with a touch of hauteur, which Egham hoped was due to jealousy. " She is a tall, thin librarian with a wart below the left ear and very large knees," said the simple soldier. And at that moment, in taking out his watch, he dropped a telegram from the Foreign Office !

IX

Guttlinger pounced on the telegram. Egham uttered a low laugh. " Gentlemen," he said, " let us now end this play-acting. All these incriminating documents that I keep dropping are my credentials. They were meant to

deceive the English. I dropped them to convince you all of my good faith. An English spy would hardly venture among you in order to incriminate himself thus carelessly." And to emphasise his good faith the Colonel showed the admiring Germans his English passport, several letters from English friends, an English watch, and even the label of an English tailor on his coat. " I flatter myself," he said, " on being thorough." The Germans were so moved that they were near to tears, and von Kalbsfleisch clicked his heels and said, " We were swine to doubt you, Bunsen. Here are our plans. Study them at your ease and return them to us, as we have no copy, as yet." Egham took the envelope, and exchanged a look of love and triumph with Dingi-Poos. As the Germans left the room, he seized her hand and covered it with loud kisses.

X

The old-world town of Dung was bathed in the moonlight of a still June night. No sound disturbed the silence save where some sleepless yak kicked a stable wall. Beneath the jasmine-covered lattice of Dingi-Poos, Colonel Egham whispered the words which women love to hear. The lovely adventuress, clad in a flounced négligée of crimson tussore, leaned from her lattice. " Foolish man ! " she whispered, as Egham tried to climb a water-pipe, and fell back into a mass of cactus. His loud oath awoke an old Tibetan laundress living opposite, and the Colonel explained to her that he was looking for a rare plant which blooms by moonlight. The laundress slowly closed one eye in an elaborate wink. As the Colonel began to climb again, his canister of pond-slime caught in a kink of the water-pipe, and he could move neither up nor down. Wedged there, he spent the night in listening to the snoring of Dingi-Poos, who had retired in boredom. Once he heard a muttered word in her dreams. It sounded like " Beachcomber " in broken Tibetan.

XI

It was obvious, even to the limited intelligence of Egham, that the Germans would ask for their plans back as soon as he had read them. His job, therefore, was to get out of the country with them as quickly as possible. He hoped to take Dingi-Poos with him, " if one could ask such an exotic and gorgeous plant," as he put it to himself, " to be Mrs. Egham." One day he brought her a gift of rare Tibetan mushrooms, gathered on the slopes of a remote mountain. " For you," he said huskily, and added, " My adored one." Idly the enchantress picked up a mushroom and examined it. " Deadly inedible fungi," she said to herself. " Were I to give a banquet, and serve them to these German swine . . ." To Egham she said, " What a beautiful gift. I will give a dinner to these Germans. While they are crazed with wine I will get you out of the country."

XII

" We trust, Herr Bunsen, that you have read and digested our plans, and are ready to return them."

The voice of von Kalbsfleisch was dangerously smooth. The light from a dozen chandeliers streamed down on the heavily-laden table. Never had Dingi-Poos appeared more beautiful and alluring. Egham, by her side, heard the fatal demand. " They are in my overcoat," he said, " and you shall have them at the end of the banquet." " Then here's a toast," said von Knückelduster, raising a large yak's-horn vessel filled with Tibetan claret. " To our charming hostess." The toast was drunk, and at that moment the " mushrooms ", cooked in a rich sauce of rancid butter, were brought in on an enormous golden dish. " Do not eat any," whispered Dingi-Poos to Egham, with heightened colour. The dish was handed round. " You do not eat, my queen ? " queried Guttlinger. " Nor you, Herr Bunsen ? " " Indigestion," said Egham. " My com-

plexion," said Dingi-Poos. And then the Germans, with gluttonish cries, fell on the deadliest poison known to the East. Egham saw the body of his hostess stiffen. Her eyes hardened as von Kalbsfleisch loaded his knife with the treacherous delicacy.

XIII

The effect of the inedible fungi on the Germans was startling. Von Kalbsfleisch tore at his collar and slithered to the floor. Von Knückelduster caught at his throat and fell forward. Guttlinger dropped like a stone. Schmallpantz turned green and died without a word. " I wonder," drawled Dingi-Poos, with studied malice, " if there is a doctor in the house." Egham, dumbfounded, love struggling with contempt, said, " You poisoned their food! To think that one so beautiful——! " " Not at all," retorted Dingi-Poos. " You supplied the stuff." " Mushrooms don't do this," said Egham. " No, mushrooms don't," said the lady meaningly. The truth began to dawn on Egham. " You mean——? " he began. " Yes," said Dingi-Poos, " poisonous fungi." Egham gazed round at the dead Germans, and then, with his unfailing gift of always saying something foolish, he turned to the radiant enchantress and muttered, " Alone, at last! " " And now for the getaway," replied Dingi-Poos, ignoring his ardent glances.

XIV

As Egham and Dingi-Poos stole from the silent banqueting-hall neither observed the crafty von Kalbsfleisch, who had merely pretended to eat the fungi, and was now watching the guilty pair from under the table. Swiftly Dingi-Poos led the Colonel by a subterranean tunnel which emerged on the main road to the Khyber Pass. Here a German car awaited them, well stocked with brick-tea and rancid butter for the journey. At the wheel was Shum, the trusty Tibetan chauffeur. As the car

started a small group of monks cheered unconvincingly. "Where are we going?" queried the Colonel. "Through Afghanistan to India and freedom," replied Dingi-Poos, "to present that map to the British authorities." The Colonel moistened his lips and felt feverishly in his pockets. Dingi-Poos smiled with deadly contempt. "I suppose you've lost it," she said. The Colonel hung his head. "Is our journey really necessary, then?" she asked with heavy sarcasm. Egham looked at her like a dog who has eaten a slipper. The car sped through the Tibetan night.

XV

As the car sped over the Haraba mountains, taking the hairpin road up the Chikan pass, it became obvious even to the dull wits of Egham that they were being followed. "It is the car of Kalbsfleisch," muttered Dingi-Poos "Surely that fiend in human shape cannot have survived the fungi." "If it is he," said Egham, "we have a chance to recover the plans I so foolishly left behind." Dingi-Poos directed Shum to slow down and pull into the side of the road. "We will let him pass," she said. "Put out the lights, Shum." In the darkness Egham slipped his arm round the lady's waist, but as he attempted to superimpose his lips upon her dainty ear, the car jerked and he butted her like a goat. "Clumsy fool," said Dingi-Poos angrily. Meanwhile the German car came roaring along, dashed by, slowed down, and drew up across the road, fifty yards from the fugitives. The coarse laugh of Kalbsfleisch told that he had seen through their stratagem! "I suppose you left your revolver behind," said Dingi-Poos, with heavy satire. Egham nodded miserably.

XVI

Kalbsfleisch, torch in one hand, revolver in the other, came slowly towards Egham. Dingi-Poos had, unnoticed,

slipped across the road to the edge of the precipice. As Kalbsfleisch raised his revolver to shoot Egham, she uttered a scream of " Help ! Help ! " Both men dashed towards her. Luckily Kalbsfleisch won, for as he reached her side, shouting, " Who dares thus to molest you ? " she stretched out her exquisite foot like a professional footballer and tripped the unwary German. Kalbsfleisch hurtled over the edge of the precipice, and Dingi-Poos listened for the final bump. It never came. " He has fallen thousands of feet," she said. " Good work ! " commented Egham. " But the plans ? " " Doubtless he carried them," she said. " But nobody will get them now." They returned to the car, where the inscrutable Shum waited at attention. " Afghanistan, Shum," said Dingi-Poos calmly. Meanwhile, 250 feet down the side of the precipice, Kalbsfleisch clung to a dwarf rhododendron which had broken his fall.

XVII

The car pulled up at the last refuge hut before the Afghan border. The surly Khatchul tribesman nodded to Egham's airy " Have you any rooms, my man ? " " One," he said, in a vile dialect of the Batchara hills. Egham coughed and examined his finger-nails. " I will have it," said Dingi-Poos. " Shum and you can sleep in the car." So saying, she followed the landlord into what looked like a large hole bored in mud. It had a crazy door. Egham, to make sure she would be comfortable, followed her in. At the sound of the key turning in the rusty lock, she swung round. " What are you doing ? " she said. " Damn ! " said Egham. " I meant to lock it on the other side." So saying, he unlocked the door again and down it fell with a crash. " Curse ! " said Egham, fixing it up as best he could. And then, with a simple gallantry that touched even that hardened adventuress, the Colonel lay down like a dog outside the ridiculous door, rolled himself up in his overcoat, and prepared to guard her with his life. A gust

of wind blew the door down in the night, but the Colonel lay where he was, with splinters and hinges all over him, dreaming of a run with the Bicester.

XVIII

Havanuthah, the Afghan chieftain, welcomed Dingi-Poos and Egham to his commodious residence, no h. or c., when he heard they were in the neighbourhood. The renowned German agent said, " Ah, Herr Bunsen, I have heard of you from our leader. And how is von Kalbsfleisch ? " " Not very well, I think," answered Egham. Dingi-Poos then explained that she and the Colonel were on their way to India to direct sabotage. And then, noticing an Afghan zither in a corner of the tent, she moved towards it and began to accompany herself in an old song of her people. In a low, vibrant voice she sang of old Tibet, keeping her large dark eyes on the swarthy face of Havanuthah. She seemed to be sending him a message, and he stood transfixed by her beauty. Egham asked himself whose side she was really on and began to feel hopeless. Then suddenly the tent-flap parted, and on the threshold, covered with leaves and dust, stood von Kalbsfleisch, a sneering smile on his coarse face.

XIX

Kalbsfleisch, who seemed to be in a merry mood, began to sing a German drinking song of the Heidelberg students:

" Im wunderschönen Festenzeug
Auf Wesel noch bezanken,
Wass ist das Hilfe köningsreug,
Getrunkt ! Getrinkt ! Getranken !

" So," he said to Havanuthah, " you know who your guests are ? Herr Bunsen, eh ? Well, he is Colonel Egham of the British Intelligence. And this lovely lady ? Ho ! Himmelspracht ! Schottenspielengehort ! Teufelslager !

Forgive my oaths, but she is as false as he is!" "One moment, Otto," said Dingi-Poos. "Does our love mean nothing to you?" "It did," said the German, "until you tried to poison me, and then knocked me over a precipice." "I had to do these hateful things," said Dingi-Poos, "in order to make Egham think I was on his side." Egham gasped. Havanuthah laughed. Kalbsfleisch cried, "Wonderful woman," and flung his arms round her.

XX

While Kalbsfleisch was raining kisses on the upturned face of Dingi-Poos, her deft fingers abstracted the plans from his inside pocket. And as he paused to drink in her beauty, she passed the plans to Egham, who was hovering round the lovers like an uneasy referee at a wrestling match. Havanuthah took it all in, but he had other business. "May I remind you, Herr Kalbsfleisch," he said, "that this lady is my wife?" You could have heard an egg fall. For a moment nobody spoke. The German's face was contorted with misery. "Deny it," he cried, "say it is not true." "Yes," said Egham, "cast the lie back in his teeth." Dingi-Poos hung her head, and her dainty foot toyed with a carpet-beetle. "It is true," she breathed. Kalbsfleisch drew himself up, clicked his heels and saluted. "Farewell, Mrs. Havanuthah," he said bitterly. "I go to volunteer for the Russian front." So saying he walked dejectedly from the tent. "Excellent," said Havanuthah. "We have the plans at last." "Who are you?" asked Egham. "The Marquis de Fufflin-Ricametz, at your service," replied the Afghan, removing a false stomach, two cardboard ears, and a plaster chin.

XXI

Egham and Dingi-Poos sat in the lounge of the Grand Hotel at Hakmal, Pearl of Afghan Resorts. "Your love

affairs seem to be in a bit of a tangle," said Egham. "A woman must express herself," replied Dingi-Poos. "The Marquis is not really my husband. Neither he nor Kalbsfleisch ever knew the real me." "Then is there hope for me?" asked Egham. Dingi-Poos shook her head. "Why not?" whined the Colonel. "Is there someone else?" Dingi-Poos laughed. "Someone else?" she repeated. "Yes. About four hundred and thirty of them. But if Beachcomber raised his little finger I would leave them all and follow him across the earth." "Why do you not come to England to meet him? Come with the Afghan journalists on their Good-Will Mission. You might even get a job in the Ministry of Information documentary films. They need colour and excitement." "No, no. My work is done. You go forward with the captured plans, to New Delhi. I will return to Dung and my humdrum life. Au revoir, Colonel Egham," "I cannot leave you," cried Egham, so loudly that the Manager intervened.

XXII

Egham's frenzied cry of love rang through the lounge. "Silly boy!" said Dingi-Poos gently. "Come with me," said Egham. "I will gratify your every whim. I will heap rationed clothes on you. As mistress of Egham Manor you will have horses, jewelry, pictures." "But I do not love you," said Dingi-Poos. "That would follow," said Egham. "You have loved so many people. What can one more or less matter? I would be content, at first, with your esteem. Amid the coppices of Egham I would woo you patiently. You would soon forget Dung and your Tibetan past. As star of a Ministry of Information documentary film you would command the adoration of millions." "Would you invite Beachcomber to Egham Manor?" she asked shyly, with a delightful blush. "Incorrigible vampire!" groaned the Colonel. "What have you in common with that spoilt darling of the Upper

Ten, that wealthy, heartless ne'er-do-well from whom English mothers hide their daughters? Beau Brummell and Don Juan of Fleet Street, Scourge of Ludgate Hill, Terror of Shoe Lane. These are his names." "How fascinating," mused the dusky adventuress.

XXIII

On a rocky Afghan plateau Colonel Egham, on his way to New Delhi with the German plans for the conquest of India, bade farewell to Dingi-Poos. A tenderness born of old friendship welled up in the lovely adventuress, who never could bear to see any man go. "I shall think of Dung," said the Colonel in a broken voice, "and of those moonlit evenings when I dared to hope that you could love me." "Ah, my foolish, faithful one," whispered Dingi-Poos, coming close to him in the dusk and making a shrewd guess as to the pocket in which he had put the plans. "Kiss me goodbye, as a friend would," she said languorously. Egham folded her in his arms and sought her lips. As she withdrew, with a pretty protest, the Colonel, speechless with love, turned away to recover his sangfroid. With a rapid movement Dingi-Poos thrust the plans into the top of her gauze-like stocking. "With Kalbsfleisch out of the way," she said to herself, "these will fetch a pretty penny from Wishiwashi, most fascinating of Japanese attachés." And she blew a kiss to Egham as he rode away to New Delhi.

Hunting Days and Hunting Ways

An unorthodox member of a hunt can make the whole thing ridiculous. When Foulenough came to the Bocester and Bumphampton he was well received. But no sooner

had he set eyes on Bella Carstock than something snapped in him. He followed her closely, and finally seized her, drew her on to his horse, and rode off with her to a quiet lunch in Yocklesford Magna. " We are not living in the Middle Ages," commented Lady Wyverne-Griffin. Bella's fiancé, Derek Lodger, found them at coffee in the lounge, and was about to punch Foulenough on the jaw when the agile Captain kicked him hard on each ankle in turn, pulled his bowler over his ears, set fire to his trousers with a hot coal, poured port over him, and then yelled for the manager to " remove this brawler ". Bella was entranced. But both were asked to resign from the hunt — after they had paid their next year's subscriptions.

I am old enough to remember Bella Carstock in her heyday. Old Lord Mercantyre said of her, " She sits a gee so well you'd think she was part of it." " Or the whole of it," retorted Amanda Garricle, a poisonous old trout. Nobody bothered about the fox when Bella led the field. Once, out of caprice, she galloped to Chalkinge station, dismounted, and took the first train that came in. The whole field followed her, dismounted, and clambered in after her, leaving only eight disgruntled women to attend to the fox.

Bella's parents took no action, fearing notoriety. And finally they asked Foulenough his intentions. He replied that he had imagined that his intentions were obvious enough, and he said that only the fact that he had, in a moment of misguided pity, married a handsome ballerina some years ago, prevented him from asking for their daughter's hand in marriage. As it was, he had persuaded the ballerina to go into pantomime, and accidents often happened with trap-doors. Would Bella wait for him ? The spirited girl replied that there appeared to be no question of waiting for him, since he was always about four moves ahead. She added, with some sarcasm, that she

already had a fiancé, and preferred his more conventional wooing. "Such priggishness sickens me," said the Captain. "I give you your freedom." And snatching back his latest bouquet and a large box of chocolates, he went out and rang up Clarissa Hawkbright.

"*Twenty Years of Uproar*"

In my extraordinary memoirs, *Twenty Years of Uproar*, advertised so consistently by me, and to so little purpose, thanks to a thoroughly vile public, there is an account of a string quartet which always played in the form of a human pyramid, in tights. And I knew a pianist who used to play while lying on his back and supporting a cart-horse on his chest. How on earth he managed it nobody ever knew. It is, I suppose, all a question of balance perfected by habit. As Sandow once said to Sibelius, "It is the man who always has a cart-horse on his chest who takes such things for granted."

Some of the reviews of my book were most favourable. My publishers announced, before the manuscript was completed, that a second printing had been called for, and that several hundred thousand copies had been sold before the title was decided on. This rather hustled me, but it disposed the reviewers in its favour. A Cabinet Minister, a boxer, and an explorer all wrote little quotable bits of praise from rough drafts supplied to them by the publisher, who, himself, said he had never published anything half as good in his life. Booksellers displayed it prominently, because of the striking colours of the jacket, and the famous names quoted thereon as praising the book. One critic said, "A mere glance through the index is enough."

ERRATUM.—On page 314, Schubert's last words should read, "Don't let poor Tauber starve."

A Cure for Apathy

I gather that various groups of women are going to try to " break down the discrimination against women parliamentary candidates ". But surely nobody but a churl and a caitiff would object if the whole House were a seething mass of women, provided that they were beautiful. The election of even one raving beauty would have an enormous effect on the apathy of the electors in other constituencies. A General Election would soon become a kind of beauty competition. The candidates would tour their constituencies in bathing-dresses, and possibly even the most crabbed and repulsive intellectuals would forget the word democracy for a few days.

But perhaps this isn't what the disgruntled women of Westminster mean.

In Passing

" Thirty hundredweight of Lovely Womanhood." The old description of Lady Cabstanleigh came to my mind when an enormous beldam sat down in the bus next to a man whose outspread newspaper contained the headline " Are You Losing Weight ? "

I remember a monstrous harridan who haunted the drawing-rooms of my boyhood, and used to sing " I Would I Were A Tiny Bird ". The wish was shared, I think, by nine-tenths of her audience, but she had a heart of gold, and always said to me. " Eat plenty if you want to be big and strong." Her standard of size and strength was certainly a high one.

Mrs. Wretch, M.P.

Mrs. Wretch, M.P., said yesterday at Flackenham : " The general public must be warned that it has no right to interfere with the State. Hardly have I recovered from the shock of noticing that parents are inclined to demand

a say in the education of their children, when I learn that many people think that they should be permitted to choose their own doctor. This obscurantism is even supported by many doctors. Such encroachments by private citizens on the liberties of the State are intolerable and must cease."

Answers to Correspondents

FLO.—My dear Flo, the fact that, when you asked him to your home, he ate his fish with a spoon may be due more to eccentricity than to ignorance of etiquette. I should tell your mother that he does it because of a vow, or because he is fond of jokes.

VERA.—You say he hates the sight of you. Well, what do you expect me to do? This is a newspaper office, not a magician's cave. Judging by your photograph, he is right, Vera.

Who would have thought it?

Ventreguienne! Palsanguienne: Morguienne! We are in it up to the fetlocks, lads! Now who in his senses would believe that what I am about to quote refers to food consumed by human beings? To that simple food called bread? Listen. Extend your long, furry ears, my spavined reader. "The use of calcium phosphate would improve the utilisation of both calcium and phosphorus in a high phytin-low calcium diet, because the phosphate ion will displace an equivalent amount of phytic acid, if sufficient calcium is provided with it."

In which case, dear Aunt Chélidoine, butter me another slice of phytic phosphorus, and hang the consequences!

In Passing

The Dean of Winchester recently quoted a director of a petroleum company as saying that he preferred employees with a classical education, because they sold more oil.

This is about the only good word for the classics we have had lately, and will probably lead motor salesmen and travellers for biscuit firms to conceal Greek plays, with little cribs, about their persons. Also, you may expect the man who calls with a carpet-sweeper to open the ball with a discussion on the place of women in Greek epic poetry.

Oh

> " According to her daughter, she refused, even as a precaution against infection, to gargle."—(News item.)

Somebody's mother isn't using tonsil.

A Bounder meets his Deserts

" ' What about 50-up at billiards ? ' he asked courteously. ' Willingly,' I replied, ' and Aunt Hester shall be our marker.'

" But, alas ! my Aunt was not to be seen, and I found myself facing him across the green baize. He had the temerity to leap on the table and advance towards me, crying, ' Billiards be damned ! I know a better game than that.' The next moment he had encircled my waist. Raising my cue, I struck at him again and again, His grasp relaxed, and, looking down, I saw that I had killed him in saving myself from a fate worse than billiards. What was I to do ? "—(From *Memoirs of a Victorian Belle.*)

The Monster

In films and on the radio the Boche officer is usually either a raving maniac, who screams at the top of his voice and loves torturing people, or a rather saddened and thoroughly misunderstood lover of books and music — a cultured gentleman who dislikes the work he has to do. A Pole who escaped from a German prison some time ago

gave a much truer picture. The Boche who murders and tortures is often something more sinister than the maniac, or the cowardly intellectual who obeys orders against his will. He is a cold monster, who murders and mutilates because he is told to, without any feelings or thoughts of his own on the matter — the nearest thing possible to a man without a soul. And that is infinitely more horrible than the popular picture of ranters and dreamers.

Mrs. Wretch, M.P.

Mrs. Wretch has accepted the chairmanship of a committee which is to discuss the school curriculum for children under three. She said yesterday: "If the State schools can have the children from the ages of 2 to 18, a great deal of worry and anxiety will be spared to parents, especially if holidays at home are abolished between those ages. Of course, there will be nothing to prevent well-behaved and efficient children paying short visits to such houses as are pronounced suitable by the authorities, but care must be taken to see that no inordinate demands are made by the parents, such as might conflict with the State's responsibility for all children."

What next?

Radio sets in the tropics have to be ant-proof. That is the explanation of the ant-centre at Wolverhampton, where the little rotters are fed on dummy radio sets. The idea is to find a set which they will refuse to eat. The picture shows Violet Pedley feeding a sulky ant on insulating tape and tasty morsels of mica. Caption: "Come, little man," says Violet to this shy ant.

For your Study Circle

It is not generally known that the Moroccan Goums now fighting in Tunisia are descendants of the old York-

shire settlers who colonised Morocco in the eighteenth century. The name comes from the constant repetition by the settlers of the words, " Eh, bah goum ! "

I join in

I am almost the only journalist who has not written, during the last three weeks, " Ninety years ago the Japanese army was equipped with bows and arrows ". So I write it now, in case anybody might think I was sulking and refusing to join in the chorus.

As a matter of fact shock troops with bows and arrows would be an admirable idea. The sudden appearance of these archers would be a tactical surprise. No enemy would be ready for them. And he would think he was facing some new secret weapon.

At it, Ladies !

I regret bitterly a certain apathy in the matter of world planning. There are not enough people at it. Several women novelists have not yet produced a single Charter, Manifesto, Blue-Print, or what-you-will. All they need do is to take Mrs. Wyckett's words and shuffle them. That will start a correspondence all over the place, and will entitle the author to be called a Great Thinker in any further articles from " that powerful pen ".

Cocklecarrot

With great trepidation Mr. Justice Cocklecarrot is bracing himself for another shock. The case which comes up for hearing shortly is, he says, on the face of it, suspicious enough. " It is redolent of those blasted dwarfs," he said yesterday, during a round of golf at Sandwich. The case is down for hearing as follows : West Aldershot Bird Fisheries and Mrs. McCattock *v.* Doubleday and Upchurch

Commercial Afghan Brokerage Corporations (Non-Resident, *ex parte* Sammy Turtledriver, Messrs. Kokough, Whittacre, Dandel, and Piphanger intervening).

Apparently these Bird Fisheries, whatever they may be, are attempting to restrain the Brokerage Corporations, whatever they may be, from inserting the word " anchor " in a description of the activities of the Jerlingham Bloater Works and Saltrex and Bibwright Mechanical Omnibus Board, on behalf of Miss Rose Chiphead and the Owcott Non-Inflammable Trouser-press Trust.

To say more at the moment would be contempt of every court in existence. But there does seem to be room, under all these preposterous concerns, for a dozen or so of red-bearded dwarfs.

With Knobs on

The League of World Betterment has enunciated its falbalotto or jaumbry. There are to be Seventy-Eight Freedoms for the entire Human Race, including Animals, Vegetables, and Minerals. The most important, and Number One on the list recently dropped on Japan, is the Freedom from Fear of Being Free to Resist Compulsory Freedom. This has been called, by Professor Cotswold (who knows what he is talking about, if anybody does, so presumably nobody does), the Linch-Pin, Axle, King-Post, and Pediment of Universal Emancipation.

Dr. Strabismus

Further experiments, conducted in an hermetically sealed chamber by Dr. Strabismus (Whom God Preserve) of Utrecht, have revealed some interesting data.

When a cold air current was turned on it was found that an Indian plainsman became more uncomfortable than an Eskimo. After a prolonged stay in the chamber, without food or drink, some of the exhibits became angry. Others laughed stupidly, but not as stupidly as the spectators.

An artist was unable to concentrate on the painting of a landscape, and a taxidermist refused to finish stuffing a ferret with sage.

Summing up

On the whole, the Doctor considers that these experiments tend to prove that lack of air, followed by extreme variations of temperature, is likely to impair efficiency. This is due to the effect of such conditions on the physical and mental attributes of the average male and female, and their inability to make the necessary adjustments with the necessary speed. Scientists all over the world are astonished at these conclusions, which contradict all that has hitherto been known about anything much.

With Comment

My favourite newspaper, alarmed at the number of placemen in the House of Commons, and noting that " the representative character of the House has been gravely weakened ", quotes the saying of an M.P. : " You could get a chimpanzee into the House if you wanted to."

It is only fair to point out that the chimpanzee would have to have a rich aunt, prepared to stump up for the secret party funds. It would also be advisable for him to learn a word or two of human speech, in case the policeman at the entrance ever said, " Good morning, sir."

The Statistical Approach

One of my favourite Groups is the Socialist Clarity Group. They have published a report which should bring the nation to its feet with a deafening cheer. What could be more useful or more enthralling than to be told that in 1923 there were 30 Labour M.P.s under 40 years of age ; and that the average age of Tories elected since the war began is 47 ?

These figures were supplied by the Oxford University Democratic Socialist Club (ta-ra-ra). I can supply some more figures. In 1928 there were 12 Liberal M.P.s under five feet nine, 18 Tories with fair hair, and only 5 Labour M.P.s with large thumbs.

Bread Again

During the recent heat-wave (German papers please copy) Dr. Strabismus (Whom God Preserve) of Utrecht conducted certain experiments with the new nomeal loaf. It was found that weasels, stoats, guinea-pigs, and rats all refused to touch the loaf with a tiny barge-pole.

Animals, therefore, being out of the question, it was decided to experiment on what for purposes of gross flattery may be called human beings. A number of writers were induced to taste the nomeal loaf. And according to Professor Gallup, 63 per cent of them turned green and began to bubble at the ears. Dame Aimée Cowbath, of the Curious Foods Bureau, said that this was a normal reaction, in writers, to any surprise.

Meanwhile, Dr. Callboys writes to me: "It may be that what the Mayor of Thistlehurst refers to as globules of tetrahydramin in the quarter-half-meal loaf are really small deposits of sulmogen and therefore evidences of the non-porous qualities of the new loaf. Portions of this product fed to a spavined horse resulted in an acceleration of the animal's pulse, a dilation of the pupils of the eyes, and a marked psymosis of the left fetlock. This suggests the presence of vitamin P in the loaf, thus making it a cure for measles."

Poetry

What frenzy buys is not for sale.
Better to skulk within the tent
Than lavish what was never caught
In singing like the nightingale

If, like a marsh-light, flickers on
The wild immortgageable soul,
Then he who dozes by the wall
Won't break his neck on Helicon.
(AUGUST CLOCKE.)

Current Rates

A man the other day handed two shillings to a taxi-driver for a one and sixpenny fare, saying, " Keep the change — or buy yourself a professional politician with it."

Old and True

" Whatever may be said of birds it can be confidently maintained that no human being has ever tried to make his nest in an old drain-pipe."—(RUSKIN.)

Borax

The other day Borax left upon his desk what I at first thought were rough notes for an article. It soon, however, became plain that this remarkable man has his own method of working. What looked like a collection of notes was the finished article, save for a few names. It ran like this : " The loss of the railway running from —— to —— would menace the entire forces between —— and ——. Meanwhile, the capture of —— exposes the enemy to a vast encirclement, unless he can fall back on —— before the pincers close. If —— falls, there is probably no strong defensive position to fall back on, until —— is reached. And the latest drive from —— menaces the entire force deployed between —— and ——."

I find, on examining a collection of his articles, that Borax has already used this one 71 times — but, of course, the names are different in each case.

C.P.

The now famous saying, " You could get a chimpanzee into the House if you wanted to," has come true. There *is* a chimpanzee in the House. He was nominated, co-opted, elected without opposition and so on, by a curious mistake. He had the same name as a rich young Liberal in the neighbourhood, and, being rather like him, deceived even relatives of the family.

When the Liberal's uncle said, " I wish my nephew wouldn't go down on all-fours in public," nobody bothered much, since the seat had been a safe one for Liberals ever since the Choddlecotes bought it, and there was nothing new for the electorate in such tricks.

V

MR. JUSTICE COCKLECARROT AND LADY CABSTANLEIGH

The Cabstanleigh Case

THE man who told Lady Cabstanleigh to shut her tank-trap offered her, through a firm of queer solicitors, threepence as compensation. The offer was refused. The man, whose name appears to be Lionel Akimbo, said, " I meant no offence to any tank-trap."

" The case being *sub rosa*," said Mr. Honeyweather Gooseboote, K.C., yesterday, " I can only say that the tank referred to could not possibly be one of the 70-ton type. Her ladyship's mouth is not as big as all that."

The Lawyers' Union has expressed, through one of its bosses, grave disapproval of Mr. Honeyweather Gooseboote's gratuitous comments on a case in which he has been briefed.

Lady Cabstanleigh, interviewed at Badgers Earth, her country residence, said : " It is an odd situation when one's own K.C. says that one's mouth is not as big as a trap for a 70-ton tank."

Lady Cabstanleigh yesterday entered a forceful plea that her case might begin at once through her solicitors Messrs. Capstan, Capstan, Fairmile, Linklove, Twizzick, Pardleton, Voph, Voph, Gelvett, Massidge, Clockaway, Flithers, Nessle, and Burgeon. But before the Clerk of Arraigns and Puisne had read beyond the second syllable of Clockaway there was not a dry mouth in court. Everybody, from the judge upwards, felt that drinking was preferable any day to the recitation of a tomfool list of names.

War-time economy had resulted in the remaining stock

of ink being poured into an empty beer-bottle. The case was, at long last, about to open when a timid usher brought in the ink and prepared to fill the judge's ink-well. Cocklecarrot shaded his hand with his eyes to read the label. Snapdriver craned forward. Gooseboote half rose, with a muffled curse. Solicitors started to their feet. Secretarial busybodies smacked their lips. Court officials crowded round the dais expectantly. Lady Cabstanleigh shrugged her shoulders with disgust. Policemen chortled, bent their knees, and fingered their belts. Obscure attorneys, notaries, and scriveners rolled their eyes. Nobody believed that the bottle contained ink. Why should it, they argued. Who, they asked themselves, wants to drink ink ?

Yesterday, in the Court of Common Pleas, Retainder and Mansuetude, Mr. Justice Cocklecarrot began to hear the Cabstanleigh libel action.

His lordship said, in an opening address to the jury: " To begin with, this is an action not for libel, but for slander, the defamatory words having been spoken, not written or conveyed by printed matter. The effect of slander is transitory, that of libel may be permanent. We begin, all of us, myself, Mr. Gooseboote, Mr. Snapdriver, the subsidiary lawyers, solicitors, notaries, scriveners, clerks, ushers, and even the public, I expect, we begin, I say, by admitting that the plaintiff's mouth is very large. That, however, does not justify us in using such expressions as tank-trap. Military experts will tell you shortly that a tank-trap may be comparatively small. . . ."

" The plaintiff," continued his lordship, " need not fear that her mouth is like a tank-trap. Whatever we may think, we pretend to assume so much in her favour. Nor need she prove that Mr. Akimbo was actuated by malicious intention or intentions. The law presumes malice, unless the remark was made on what is called a privileged occasion or occasions. Nor need the plaintiff prove

damage. The law assumes damage. Thus, the law being what it is, no wonder there are so many plaintiffs. It is money for jam ! "

Mr. Honeyweather Gooseboote (for the plaintiff): Since malice and damage are presumed, and since the law forbids us to asume that her ladyship's mouth resembles a tank-trap, why waste further words ? I demand a verdict of guilty.

Mr. Tinklebury Snapdriver (for the defendant): There is more in the law than that. Otherwise we, my learned friend, would be superfluous. I refer you to Bubbleworth on Defamation. I hope to show that the mere utterance of slanderous words, *per se* and *qua se*, was, on this occasion, subject to exuage and malfeasance. (Sensation.)

In blazing heat the case was resumed — if I may use such a word of a case that has obviously not even begun. Mr. Tinklebury Snapdriver was about to hazard one of those ponderous observations for which he is so justly detested, when his alert ear caught the sound of a cork being pulled from a bottle. He paused, and, with a lizard-flick, whisked his parched tongue across his arid lips. All heads turned towards the pleasant sound, and Cocklecarrot instinctively held out the glass on his table.

There was a sound of pouring at the back of the court, where a boy was flipping his cheek with his first finger. The imitation was perfect. So perfect that the boy was called to the judge's table. A whispered altercation ended in money changing hands, and the court waited in ill-concealed impatience for the arrival of the stuff. When the boy returned with two men who carried a tell-tale case of bottles, there was a long-drawn " A-a-ah ! "

The unusual thing about Lady Cabstanleigh's libel action is that the opposing counsel, Mr. Gooseboote and

Mr. Snapdriver, have already agreed that Mr. Akimbo was tolerably correct in describing her enormous mouth as a tank-trap. It will be interesting to see which side the judge is on.

Mr. Justice Cocklecarrot is always fairly careful about committing himself in advance, but it is known that his tongue wags freely when he is amused, and if I were her ladyship I should demand some other judge.

Mr. Justice Cocklecarrot said yesterday, " Since everybody connected with the Cabstanleigh libel action is expressing an opinion, perhaps I, as the judge about to try the case, may be permitted to say that the alleged possession by a lady of a mouth like an alleged tank-trap is not a disgrace. It is a misfortune. *De minimis non curat lex.* But it curats all right when it is a question of *maximis.*"

A legal spokesman in close touch with official sources said, " Never before have I known a case in which, before it began, even the judge and the counsel had taken sides to the extent of almost saying that the libel was justified. The nearest parallel I can remember is the case of Buskin-Powte versus the fakir Ogobi. The fakir said that Mr. Buskin-Powte looked like a demented codfish. When the plaintiff indignantly protested, the judge, glancing at the jury, said, " Well, doesn't he ? "

Hardly had Lady Cabstanleigh, in a simple blue velours gaberdine with red serge facings, taken the oath, when some technical business held up the court. Mr. Gooseboote and Mr. Snapdriver were observed to be making signs to three or four hangers-on, barristers and solicitors, and smaller fry. They appeared to be signalling in a code of their own. Finally, when Mr. Gowland Popperhawke had thrown back his head and gargled, Mr. Justice Cocklecarrot said, " If you gentlemen are about to

say that your grandmothers are to be buried today, you'd better go and get the drinking over." There were muffled cheers, round oaths and boyish gestures as the whole legal outfit went rushing out of the court. All his lordship had to do was to slip into his robing room where a sycophantic junior was guarding a cool quart from prying eye and predatory hand.

"Today," said Mr. Justice Cocklecarrot, "I fully intend to proceed with this case, circumstances not altogether outside our control having previously prevented us from making a start." He paused, and everybody distinctly heard a sound of slow dripping. It might have been water.

Yes, it might have been water.

But Cocklecarrot knew that a little barrel of beer stood on a table in his robing-room, and it was from that direction that the sound came. He glanced nervously round. Barristers, solicitors, and what-not were fidgeting in their seats. Mr. Gooseboote was half-way to his feet, Mr. Snapdriver was poised for a spring. Realising the importance of getting to the barrel with a clear start, Cocklecarrot rose hastily and ran from the court. As he gained the door of his robing-room the hot breath of Messrs. Gooseboote and Snapdriver was on the back of his wig.

Mr. Justice Cocklecarrot said yesterday: "Hitherto this case has concerned itself almost exclusively with drink. Not a single piece of evidence has come my way, not a single document have I perused, not a single exhibit — apart from innumerable bottles — has been presented. Unmindful of the stresses and anxieties of the Law, we in this court have led an almost Arcadian existence — from hand to mouth, if I may so express myself. Reclining at our ease, we have feasted in pagan insolence. But now the hour of reckoning is come. The Pan-pipes grow fainter. Bacchus and his train of attendants fade into the mist, and

before our horrified eyes stretch the long hours of tedious wrangling, slick debating points, shameless cozening — all the deceits and treacheries and balderdash of the courts. Let us to it, brave lads, and get it over quickly, that we may return to saner occupations."

Mr. Justice Cocklecarrot, in his opening address to the jury, said: " So far there has been nothing but drinking in this case. Excessive heat is no justification. That is to say, it is not a complete justification. At least, it does not excuse perpetual drinking. That is to say, it is regrettable, unless, of course — hang it all, there is no harm in drinking, and it is a far better way of passing the time than sitting about owlishly in hot wigs and pretending to dispense justice. Case dismissed." (Sensation.)

Pretty Decent

Nothing lately has shown so plainly the innate democratic decency of the House of Commons as that forceful plea made by a colourful lady member for " Tiny owners of property who are by no means wealthy ". What dwarfs endure on the land, unless they have rich aunts, nobody can imagine who has not seen these elfin bands at work.

Hansard, which has about as much human feeling as an inspector of rectified suet-type substitute, misses the poetry of this appeal, which was followed by a cry of " Hear, hear ! " from an onlooker, a girl whose complexion, we are assured, was perfect. But read the sequel. This girl " was spoken to by an attendant, and afterwards left the chamber ".

We of the old 95th can only hope that this attendant, while quoting the by-law which makes it an offence for a stranger to applaud the heartfelt utterance of one of our

legislatrettes, found means to whisper in the girl's ear his detestation of his menial task.

The smaller the owner of property, the more is he exposed to insult and contumely, unless he can produce a lump of money to vouch for his respectability. Just look at the impoverished squire of Much Worsted, two feet in his socks, and the target for every Government-controlled egg in the district.

The Taller, the Healthier

Students of moophology were intoxicated to hear that today Glasgow's boys of 13 are ·88 inch taller than Glasgow boys of 13 used to be before the war. If the whole point of being a Glasgow boy of 13 is to grow taller and taller, the method of war food is a very slow one. But if it doesn't matter much whether a boy is tall or short, so long as he is healthy and happy, then it is difficult to join the cheers and loud boasting of those who have made this world-shaking discovery. I knew a Glasgow boy of 13 who was 6 feet high and very unhealthy.

Grandmother

" There are still openings for women of all ages."—(From a speech.)

The soldier dreams in some Apulian grove
Of granny knitting by the kitchen stove,
Not knowing that in 1943
The dear old lady's run away to sea.

They must express Themselves

Women who talk as though they had rings through their noses and were perpetually being sold in public in Kensington High Street make me laugh until my sides ache. I love their letters to the papers, I love their speeches

to grave gatherings of the enslaved. I suppose they can only get to these meetings by bribing the men who stand with naked scimitars, guarding their boudoir doors. Or, when they are allowed out, heavily veiled, on to the roof in the evenings, perhaps they bribe the attendant with sweetmeats, climb through the skylight, and go slinking through the streets. Poor little things! They are but chattels.

Von Spurius and the Circular Thrust backwards

Borax is at present completely eclipsed by von Spurius, who is bringing back to military criticism the grand old German mystifications and the nonsense-talk which influenced English military criticism before the last war. Von Spurius is developing the official German theory that the recent staggering victories of the Germans in Russia are due to " circular tactics of mobility on the spot ". This is what Captain Mosch means by " circumferential elasticity and the radial static-dynamic of the whirlpool defensive ". You go round and round on one bit of ground until it is time to withdraw to another bit of ground, where you again go round and round. Unless the enemy follows you round and round, he will not maintain contact. Such is the theory.

Borax

Borax writes : " To protect 1734 miles (including inlets) of coastline Germany has nineteen divisions. That means, for all practical purposes, $3\frac{1}{8}$ men to every mile and a quarter. Those men must sleep. It should be possible therefore to surprise the $2\frac{1}{8}$ while their comrade is asleep. With a strategic reserve of eight divisions Germany could probably rush 1238 men to a threatened point at one hour's notice. But what about a parachute landing that takes the $3\frac{1}{8}$ men in the rear before the 1238 can come up from the nearest strategic base ? "

Song of the Compulsorily Educated

Thrice justified the years of dull endeavour !
Ten thousand forms completed for the State !
Oh, envy the compulsorily clever
Whose luckless fathers were illiterate.

Edwardian Echoes

The report that the Shah in his palace at Teheran " belaboured a Minister with the flat of his sword, and drove him from the building " must surely have been taken from the libretto of " The Girl from Teheran ".

Fifi : Your highness ! Your highness ! Have pity on the poor Minister !

Shah (suspiciously) : Hm ! What is he to you ?

Fifi (defiantly) : I love him !

Comedian : That's one in the snout for your blooming Majesty.

(*Song : Shah and Fifi, " When love dawns "*.)

The Mayor gets confused

" The Mayor puffed and blew his hardest,
but the match went out."—(News item.)

" *But*," you notice. In spite of all those precautions, the match went out. I suppose, when the match had gone out, he lit his pipe with it, and, holding his breath hard, smoked what turned out to be an empty pipe.

Simple Problem

If one firm, with a dozen directors whose names are kept from the public, puts on the market six different kinds of chemical muck masquerading as real food, and is fined a few pounds in each case, how long will it take the same

firm, using the same directors, to start six more kinds of chemical muck ?

Drama of Chance Meeting

Two brothers who had not met for ninety-one years came face to face in a Swindon street yesterday. They did not recognise each other, and so each went on his way. ' They will probably never meet again now,' said Councillor Towte, when informed of this coincidence. ' Probably not,' commented a prominent local bystander.—(Beachcomber News Agency.)

Tail-piece

" Every great-grandmother called up releases a grandmother for more important work."—(MRS. WRETCH, M.P.)

Scenes at Bournemouth

Dr. Strabismus (Whom God Preserve) of Utrecht, addressing the Premature Urn Burial Society at Bournemouth, confined himself to booing and hissing the audience. The moment the chairman began to introduce him the Doctor threw an egg at him, which, at such close range, spattered two ladies who were also on the platform. The Doctor then heckled the audience whenever any one of them tried to ask why he did not begin. Finally he was removed by the police for creating a disturbance. He said afterwards, " I seem to have got things the wrong way round."

Special Programme

" Today we honour Tristan da Cunha, remote bastion of porphyritic basalt, guano, and penguins." (A penguin's cry is heard in the distance. The National Anthem of Tristan da Cunha swells and fades.) " Well, Bostock,

what do you feel about Tristan ? " " Well, of course, I know nothing about it." " Thought it was an opera by Wagner, eh ? " " That's about it, Trivett." (Penguin's cry repeated.) " Good day, madam, aren't you very lonely here ? " (Noise of gramophone record starting.) " Aguasol ye para del barrio y guano, no machuca." " Quite. What is that over there ? " " Eet ees agg off Pingueen, no ? " " How jolly. Well, Bostock. You know now ! " " Yes, Trivett. Yes, I know now." (Penguin's cry repeated. A loud voice yells " Salute — to — Tristan da Cunha ! ")

Eight out of Four think

A " Fussy Freda " Survey of public opinion was taken yesterday to find out whether Marshal Laski maunders on and on about Russia because he likes to, or because he can't help it. The result is a tremendous proof, if proof were needed, of I forgot what. Here it is :

49 per cent were sick.
57 per cent hit the questioner in the face.
41 per cent took no notice.
83 per cent said : " Yes."
26 per cent said : " No."
1043 per cent said : " Don't understand."

A Lesson from Ventrejaune

My old friend Ventrejaune, who could empty a bottle of Rigailhou or any other red Graves in less time than it takes to bribe a professional politician, once invented a humane rabbit-trap. I bring it to the attention of the House of Lords. It was a little box containing lettuce soaked in chloroform. The rabbit ate the lettuce, lost consciousness, and was then electrocuted.

Dr. Strabismus (Whom God Preserve) of Utrecht once sent to the Colonial Office a scheme for getting rid of all the mice in Australia. The idea, briefly, was to ship them

to France, and take them to the great caves of the Aveyron, where Roquefort cheese matures in darkness and tranquility. No sooner should the mice be inside, laughingly preparing to enjoy the feast, than the entrances of the caves would be blocked.

The scheme was violently opposed by the cheese manufacturers, mouse-lovers, and local dignitaries of Roquefort, who said they would rather have mice in Australia than badly nibbled cheese in Roquefort. "Suppose," said they, "the mice eat all the cheese and get out by the back way?"

A Word to the Bishops

The vanished Zaharoff millions are in Joanna Southcott's box — at it, you bishops!

This important truth was revealed to me not only in a dream, but by the Sortes Virgilianae, the stars, the entrails of a cow, and a curious arrangement of leaves taught me by the sibyl of Panzoust, whom I knew well in the old days when Haremburgis was Empress of Maine and Poitou.

I know that this cool-headed, advanced, practical age regards all necromancy with contempt, as the survival of a superstitious epoch before education and insurance were compulsory. I know that no newspaper reader takes any notice of astrology, but still, I prepare to risk this opinion of mine.

Open the box, and judge me.

Dancing in Court

> "The vocalist recited the words until, nearing the end, he unconsciously slipped into yodelling 'Oy, oy, oy.' 'Never mind that,' said the judge." (News Item.)

Very different was the behaviour of Mr. Justice Cocklecarrot, during the hearing of the case in which the Braghurst Rainfall Committee sued the dancer Sonia Tum-

belova for infringement of copyright. The committee had organised a ball in aid of publicity for the local rainfall statistics. One of the officials had invented a dance for the occasion. This dance was subsequently copied by the famous Russian dancer, who, during the case, unconsciously slipped into dancing. The judge was so entranced that he actually applauded. When his attention was recalled to the case he said, " It serves the committee copy well right."

I am not suggesting that this is the normal procedure in English courts of law.

The Majesty of the Law

There are going to be classes for young barristers, to teach them elocution and voice production.

Waste of time. All they need is to cultivate the bullying manner which makes a successful advocate, and the various tricks by which timid people are wearied and finally terrified.

Counsel (suavely to witness): You say the time was 6.30 ?

Witness: Yes.

Counsel (harshly): Do I understand you to say the time was 6.30 (glances meaningly at judge).

Witness: Yes.

Counsel (with righteous anger): I put it to you that it was 6.31.

Witness: I——

Counsel (roaring): Please answer " Yes " or " No " to my questions.

Witness: I have already told you twice that it was 6.30.

Counsel (shrugs shoulders and appeals to judge).

Judge: You must answer the question.

Witness: I have already——

Judge: You are in a court of law. I shall have to fine you for contempt.

Counsel: You say the time was 6.30.

Witness: Yes.

(Counsel, having failed to intimidate the witness or make him lose his temper, gives in with a bad grace.)

The Egyptian Tangle

My diplomatic oaf writes: "In Wafdist circles Mustacha Pasha's sudden volte-face is thought to cloak a subtle attempt to seduce Bribim Pasha from his new-found allegiance to the Agrarian Liberals. Ismail and Blakmail, the two dark horses of the reconstituted Young Intellectuals Group, are known to be exerting pressure on Bakrasha to purge the party of intransigeant elements. Interviewed yesterday in the *Nile Delta Gazette*, Jakas said: 'Egyptian democracy can take it.' 'Take what?' queried the reporter. For answer the handsome face of the Tewfikist leader broke into a sophisticated smile."—(By cable from Suej.)

In Passing

Not even children can escape the meddling bureaucrats. Somebody has discovered that children dislike being sent to bed early. But it is not enough for their parents to pack them off. Oh, no. They must read a fiddling leaflet which explains to them that "the brain has more than ten million separate cells", and each cell needs rest. It is "like a battery running low. Get into bed and switch off."

Ye gods! What a world to live in!

There is also, of course, a leaflet for the parents, as patronising and impudent as anything could be, telling them how to treat their children.

Mrs. Wretch again

British restaurants must be retained after the war, unless we want people to go back to the old reactionary habit of having meals in their own homes Communal

feeding, a lesson taught us by cattle, is a duty we owe to the State."—(MRS. WRETCH, M.P.)

Special Bread Supplement

Writing in the *Evening Oven and Yeast-Sifters' Recorder*, Sir Charles Heebie-Jeebie advances the irritating theory that the tendency of the new cereal nomeal loaf to evaporate at a touch is due to the fact that the recipe submitted by the Interim Committee of master scientists was not for bread but for a synthetic plaster of paris, to be used as a covering for cheese-jars during the autumn equinox.

Sir Charles, who once baked for McGaltery and Hogus, of Reading, calls this a laughable error. But, in a letter to the *Bleaching World* Dame Muriel Scavenger says that, if this is so, the laugh is on the Sale by Weight Committee, whose chairman, Sir Emmanuel Tardlespoon, has written so ably on Turkish bread, and on the infra-milling of wheat extract by the Rorch-Depuisny method — a method which does away with dough-kneading, because there are no superficial gases in unblended yeast.

Some years ago Professor Andrade discovered that the gluten of tassic flour can be rendered immune to the wheat germ by isolating it for several days. Why on earth, then, have not the promoters of the cereal nomeal loaf adopted this method, which is particularly suitable to limewashed ovens with revolving trays ? Inert wheat can be stored for weeks, without harm to the globules of ferrohydramin, which are so nutritious, although tasteless and of rather a rank smell when devitalised by the Garganet method of external milling.

Wheat, thus treated, should, of course, be ground with rubber slabs, and not with the old-fashioned stones.

While public attention is focused upon the several

delicious kinds of bread now available, it would be wrong to ignore the extraordinary little octagonal loaves, with no crust, and slightly grey, which are being turned out by a firm of go-ahead scientists. This bread is crammed with every nutritious ingredient known to the Toxicologists' Union, and can be either eaten or woven into rugs. Its basis is Holemeelo, the new near-cereal residue of unmilled bast. Put into horses' eyes, it at once makes them frisky.

The Old, Old Story

Nothing is more diverting than the age-old debate about the cleaning of buttons in the Army. It has just burst out again, with the same old rubbish about soldiers hating button-cleaning.

Of course they hate it. And they hate going on parade, and cleaning their rifles, and so on. But everybody ought to know by now that the good soldier is the man who does what he's told without writing to the papers or to M.P.s to explain that he is far too highly educated to be bothered with such trivial points of discipline.

As a soldier in one of Kipling's stories observed, the recruit never sees any point in boring and humdrum tasks until he goes into action. And then the mystery of discipline is solved.

In the last war soldiers made up mock-lugubrious songs about button-cleaning instead of taking it too seriously. But then, of course, we were a herd of illiterate savages compared with the cultured soldiers of today who read the —— ——.

How can you expect a man who goes in for Gallup polls to endure the menial tasks of the barrack-room ?

Answers to Correspondents

CLARA.—No wonder your mother did not take to him if, on his first visit, he twanged his braces at her, lifting

them and then letting them slap back against his shirt. Perhaps it was his nervousness.

DOT.—His loud smacking noise, imitative of a kiss, is bad form at tea-time, but to follow it up with a cry of "Yum-yum" really places him beyond the pale.

ENID.—If, when he says he was at Eton, you suspect him of meaning Slough, you should endeavour to find out his social background.

Art

Some days ago a film actress in America had a dispute with an artist about a portrait he had painted of her. She said that he had used his wife as a model, and that bits of the picture were not herself at all, but his wife.

There is, at large in London, an artist who uses his horse as a model whenever he paints society women — at least that is the only explanation I can think of. A critic said of one of his Academy pictures, "One can almost hear her neighing." Once this artist went too far. He gave his sitter a nosebag.

It is not generally known that Landseer ate coal until they painted cubes of sugar black and filled the scuttle with them.

Advice to Girls in War-time

If a handsome young officer in battle dress raises his hat politely to you, and invites you to "A spot of tiffin in the Mess this evening," say coldly, "I don't think, sir, I have the pleasure of your acquaintance. Kindly place all your cards on the table. If your purpose be to strike up a friendship with me, pray arrange that one of your brother officers shall effect an introduction." He will admire you all the more for being an old-fashioned girl.

[Tomorrow there will be published here or hereabouts a powerful and offensive article, from the typewriter of a leading authority, called "Whither, Balkans?" It will describe in detail what is going on in the Balkans.]

Hunting Days and Hunting Ways

This won't do. This will not do. I see it is claimed that a fox caught in the North Riding, weighing 29½ lb. and measuring 5 ft. 3 ins. from nose to brush, is the largest ever caught.

Before my eyes as I write is the snout (mounted on a walnut shield) of a fox kicked to death by my horse Turquoise in the middle of a meet outside the " Magpie " at Biteleigh. I was joint master of the Nibbleham, and as we sat our nags drinking a tawny port which seemed to owe its richness more to certain laboratorical idiosyncrasies in the neighbourhood of Islington than to the more orthodox skill of the Portuguese blenders, we were startled to see an enormous red fox wandering about among the horses. Luckily the hounds were engaged on a big meal in the back-yard.

The ensuing scene was Old England at her gravest. The jovial red-faced huntsman blew his horn. The whipper-in ran to fetch the hounds, and the field became alert and poised, shading bloodshot eyes with port-stained hands. I was astride Turquoise before my groom Osway could get the bottle out of my pocket. And then, just as the Hon. Mrs. Gackwynde-Privett was trilling " Gone Away ! " Turquoise lashed out with his left hind-leg and caught the fox on the jaw. The fox went down as though pole-axed, and Major Clattering's self-conscious " Tantivy ! " was an anti-climax. I tossed the Master for the fox, and won. It weighed 84 lb. and measured 16 ft. 9 ins. from nostril to pigtail. Or am I thinking of a fish I caught in the Wandle ?

Scrunch, Scrunch

> " His pictures have a trance-like quality. One wonders if they are quite real."—(Art critic.)

Bite off a bit, cully, just to settle the matter.

While I think of It

Motto for a Bognor Regis man with a lisp : Suffix by the Sea.

A Solemn Thought

> "If Shakespeare were writing today there is no doubt that he would be creating film scenarios which would do half Hollywood's work for them."—(Provincial paper.)

All he would ask is that they should get Sauerkrautz or some one to do the words.

Thanks to Snibbo

DEAR SIR,—For many years I thought there was a little Persian milkman in iron trousers riding a zebra round my room. Then I was recommended to take Snibbo, and I have not seen that little Persian milkman since.—(*Signed*) F. TOGGLETON.

[If you suffer from little Persian milkmen, mice in tartan overcoats, yellow gasworks with bristles all over them, neuralgia, depression, or boils, write for the free Snibbo Booklet, recommended by 123,784 doctors.]

The Reward of Patience

Some gramophone people recently went to New Caledonia to make records of ancient native songs. They found a native who said he could sing a rare and most interesting folk-song. So they spent many hours getting ready the recording apparatus.

When all was ready they summoned the old lad, and waited in a state of almost delirious excitement. The native drew himself up proudly and sang "Oo-wah" over and over again for thirty-seven minutes.

Is it too much to hope that this song will one day serve to fill up a dangerously silent gap in a radio programme, between a talk on what to do with stale jelly and an up-to-date version of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony specially arranged for the electric xylophone (with coloured lights bobbing in and out and commented on by a comedian)?

Song of a State Child

When first I met my mother
 I felt a fearful fool,
For there's not much time for parents
 In a properly run school.

An Inspector introduced us
 In the half-hour break for tea,
And I think she got a shock to find
 That I was thirty-three.

I fancy she disliked me,
 For she went off in a rage
And joined a sub-committee formed
 To raise the leaving age.

Shame!

Complaints are reaching everybody about the mysterious order for the zoning of laundresses. This order seems to imply that if any laundress measuring more than seven inches from top to toe is caught, she must be thrown back into the water.

This is too ridiculous to be anything but a misunderstanding. It is pointed out in laundry circles that, since every laundress is considerably over seven inches in height, the position would become impossible. There was a hot exchange in the House recently when a question was asked about the laundresses. A Liberal thought he heard the

word Fascist, and immediately cried " Hear, hear ! " With withering contempt the Member for some miserable hole or other said, " I perceive that my honourable friend would like to drown all full-sized laundresses." (Cries of Shame ! Name ! Hitler ! Murderer ! Stalin ! Mussolini ! Willkie ! Ginger Rogers ! Withdraw ! Divide ! Apologise ! Siam !)

Home, Sweet Home

The Royal Institute of British Architects Reconstruction Committee wants a National Building Board, to operate a building code for the whole country. " No building would be exempt from the code."

Oh, good egg ! Why on earth should anybody be permitted to live in the kind of house he likes ? What we should all like to see, if you please, my dear " experts ", is one standardised house, mass produced, shovelled out by the ton, and stuck down in regular lines all over England. Crammed with " functional " beauty, of course. And, if possible, made of yellow concrete, steel, and glass. Put my name down for thirty, size three.

Laskiate ogni speranza . . .

Amgot, they tell me, won't be democratic
Till to the polls the poor Italian flocks,
To contemplate, as in a dream ecstatic,
Professor Laski with his ballot-box.

Rather jolly, I mean

" When Stanley and Livingstone met at Ujiji, Stanley said, ' Where are we ? ' And Livingstone answered ' Ujiji.' Stanley, of course, thought Livingstone was calling him a horse, and they never spoke to each other again."—(From MRS. POPPER'S *Whither Livingstone ?*)

Votes for Animals

A gentleman who is described as a " well-known fox-hunter " said a day or two ago. " If foxes, like women, had the vote, I think they would vote unanimously for the keeping up of fox-hunting."

I asked a well-known fox his opinion of this, and he said, " That is quite true, but provided that it was we foxes who did the hunting. We believe that fox-hunters would rather be hunted to death than shot or caught in traps."

As a matter of fact — and it is only with facts that I deal — a Bill is being prepared which will give foxes and other animals a vote. Now that human beings have grown sick of the farce of going to the polls, and are presenting themselves in ever smaller numbers, something has to be done.

By giving animals a vote you raise their status and increase their self-respect.

Sorry

Enormous twenty-inch guns that can fly under water, battleships that can sail over land, mile-long transport planes that will run on rails, fortified islands steered by electrical control, sham mountains dropped by parachute, vast magnets capable of attracting the entire armament of a division out of the enemy lines, flaming steel horses that will gallop over concrete emplacements — these are some of the marvels of science which, according to Professor Tramble in his *What is Not Coming*, we are never likely to see.

In Passing

There is a tendency to judge vegetables by sheer weight and size, as though they were modern sculpture — instead of being about twice as beautiful.

I am continually reading, " Dear Sir, I can beat Mrs. Widgegrass. Yesterday I dug up an onion weighing 3 cwt.", or " Dear sir, we have a potato measuring four feet from top to toe ". One such " controversy " was broken up by a very rude man who wrote, " Every pea in my garden weighs over 14 lb." Letters poured in, saying that surely he must be mistaken. He replied that he had indeed been mistaken. The weight was over 34 lb., not 14. That silenced them.

The Luck of the Needles

Lord Dudley's statement that " knitting is better than card-playing for men " takes no account of human nature.

If men abandoned card-playing there would soon be knitting-sharpers on race-trains, and three-purl-trick men at fairs. The police would have to warn travellers not to join strangers at knitting, and foreign casinos would still be crowded with people anxious to try some " system ", and prepared to lose large sums on a single stitch. " Poor Charles," you would hear, " he lost his fortune at knitting. The needles never brought him any luck."

As for the bad men of Dead End Gulch, imagine what knitting would do to them. Imagine the click of the needles in Old Man Jed's saloon, and half a sock flung to the ground with a foul oath. How they sneer when the green-horn comes in, and doesn't notice the evil leer of the man who shuffles the wool, and deals a tangled and broken mass with which nobody could knit, even when stimulated by hard liquor.

15,674 not out

" Fourteen brothers whose ages total 15,674 years are living together in the little hamlet of Muckfurther. They still play cricket, and none of them has ever seen a railway train."—(Beachcomber News Agency.) (For Golden Weddings see index.)

The Interview

" Courtesy to an applicant means courtesy,
and nothing more."—(A speaker.)

It doesn't mean :

Girl Applicant : I have come to see what job I can fill.

Official : With your beauty and my ambition we ought to be able——

Applicant : Yes, yes. Have you a vacancy in the conveyor-belt edging section ?

Official : In two days they'd be eating out of your hand.

Applicant : I don't want anybody to eat out of my hand. I want a job.

Official : If I had my way, you'd be Manageress of the whole show by next Tuesday. What eyes ! Here's a form. Don't bother about any of the questions. Just write your name and telephone number clearly. You'll be hearing from me.

Ask Mrs. Scafologue

Life in war-time brings many problems to the ordinary cretin. I have therefore engaged the services of Mrs. Scafologue. She will answer all questions. " Write to Mrs. Scafologue about it " will soon become the catchword of our Empire.

For instance, " Daisy " wants to know where to keep a cow. She lives in a small house without a back-yard. Mrs. Scafologue says, " Is the roof flat ? If it is, keep the cow on it. If it isn't, put the cow's front paws down the chimney, and tether the rest of it to the chimney-pot, thus countering the dangerous slope."

Poor Old Public !

Oh, poor, poor public. If you frown, and say everything is going badly, you are dirty, panic-mongering defeatists.

If you smile, and say everything is going to be all right you are dirty, complacent Fifth Columnists. If you hold your tongue you are apathetic. If you criticise the Government you are sabotaging the war effort. If you praise the Government you are indulging in wishful thinking. If you call our defeats victories you are afraid to face the truth. If you call them defeats you are lowering *moral*. If you object to the fooleries of party politics during a war you are being undemocratic.

Anyhow, you are pretty beastly, as I have always said.

Without Comment

" M.P.s hurried in to see him sitting there with the large black snout from the mask wobbling up and down now and then when he coughed. Mr. Denman ended the situation by asking whether it was in accordance with normal civil habits, when another member was speaking, for an M.P. to be wearing his gas mask."—(Morning paper.)

Old and True

CCCXLIV

O Democracy ! Crash out, strike down, O Man !
Go forward ! O Man, winged and prepared !
O Man ! What ho !

(WALT WHITMAN.)

VI

LIFE AT BOULTON WYNFEVERS

I

ONE of Lord Shortcake's many hobbies was amateur theatricals. The choice of plays at the Manor was somewhat restricted since my dear old master was convinced that Nature had cast his lady for the part of a large and dignified Empress. If there was no Empress in the play chosen he became angry. On one occasion he made so bold as to edit a well-known comedy. He added, here and there, the words "Enter the Empress", but nobody took any notice. Latterly, the moving spirit of these productions was a young man called Enoch Broodie, whose doctrine appeared to be that nothing mattered in a play except the lighting and the scenery and the costumes. Since Lord Shortcake belonged to the old-fashioned school, there were many loud disputes.

II

My old master liked the plays performed in the hall at Shortcake Manor to be of what he called the "breezy, open-air style". He used to shout over the breakfast table, "We don't want any of this sex nonsense here." The result was that the characters invariably wore tennis clothes and carried rackets. I remember an occasion when the hero had to embrace the heroine. Both of them suggested that the rackets should be left behind for this scene. But my master roared, "Damn it! We don't want any Continental foolery. Kiss her and get it over, but don't drop the racket." Although he never presumed to act as official producer, his advice was so noisy and so continuous that everybody used to give in to him in the end.

III

Enoch Broodie, whose tastes were "advanced", found it very difficult to give rein to his modernist ideas in an atmosphere of tennis and golf and cricket. He once spent four days experimenting with a deep shadow that was to fall from the corner of a summer-house. "What's all this?" cried Lord Shortcake. "A new idea with shadows, sir," said Broodie. "Shadows be hanged!" shouted my master. "We want the audience to see what is going on, don't we? If this is one of your confounded artistic ideas, keep it, my boy, for when we produce Ibsen — which will be after my death, I can tell you." Sometimes a bit of dialogue would puzzle my master. Then he would say, "We must cut out all this highbrow stuff, Broodie. I don't understand it, so why should anybody else?"

IV

On one occasion my master consented to take a small part in a play. All he had to do was to enter from the left at the end of the act, in the character of a sporting peer, and, accepting a cigar, say, "Thanks awfully." But he made so much fuss over rehearsing this that the play was held up for weeks. He insisted on playing it very, very slowly. "This part," he said, "must suggest dignity. It's no good rushing on like an American salesman, grabbing a cigar, chewing it, and tearing off again. And I ought to say a bit more, otherwise it looks as though I only entered the room to cadge a cigar. How about my saying, 'Jolly weather, eh?' or something like that? And somebody ought to offer me a light. I only look an ass with an unlit cigar and the curtain coming down so soon afterwards."

V

At the first performance of the play in which Lord Shortcake made his appearance as a sporting peer, he took

matters into his own hands. When his cue came he walked on slowly, accepted the cigar, and said, "Thanks awfully." The guests moved towards the French windows, and the stage manager prepared to signal for the curtain to be lowered. But my master had other plans. He began to talk to everybody about the weather, and while they all stood awkwardly wondering what to do next, he began to tell a racing story. The stage manager made violent faces in the wings, but my master kept that curtain up three minutes, and got a round of applause when he said, "What is this weed I am smoking? A Stinkadora, I presume."

VI

The day at last came when Lady Shortcake had the chance of playing an Empress.

To my master's delight it was decided to produce a farce called "Sailors Do Care", with a character in it called the Empress of Ruritania. He at once informed Lady Shortcake. She, however, when she had read the play, refused to make her entrance in a washing-basket carried by ratings. So the script was changed, and Lady Shortcake was to appear dressed like Britannia, and holding a trident. This had nothing to do with the play, and it made the rest of the cast laugh so much that the whole idea had to be abandoned. Instead, my mistress played the Bognor stowaway, Alice, and had to wear a straw hat inscribed on the band with the words "H.M.S. Loveaduck". Only her ladyship's dignified bearing saved this situation.

VII

Lord Shortcake was very keen on a little incidental music in our productions. But as his taste was for the old-fashioned valse, it was not always easy to please him. For instance, one year we were doing "Invisible Footsteps", an exciting thriller. Enoch Broodie suggested

that during the big robbery scene a few sinister bars should be played softly. But my master wanted a valse called " Mignonette ". When Broodie said that such music was unsuitable, and would make the audience laugh, my master replied, " It is the play that is unsuitable to the music, not the other way round." Mr. Broodie did not know what on earth to say to that, and the matter hung fire.

" Let me try to understand your point," said Enoch Broodie. " You say that this play is not suitable for the valse ' Mignonette '. Surely you mean that it is the valse which is out of place ? " " Not at all," snapped Lord Shortcake. " Then," said Mr. Broodie, with a wry smile, " why don't we just chuck the play and have the valse instead ? " " Well, why don't we ? " replied my old master. At which Mr. Broodie began to tear his hair. Presently, with infinite patience, he said, " Can't you see that *any* valse is ridiculous for such a play, and particularly for a robbery scene, even if played softly ? " " Softly be hanged ! " replied my master. " We want the audience to hear it. It must be played loudly." Mr. Broodie, uttering a scream, retired from the controversy.

VIII

At a full-length rehearsal of the thriller the valse " Mignonette " was played during the safe-breaking scene. Broodie was beside himself with rage, and the cast and spectators all began to laugh. " There ! " shouted Broodie. " Can't you see that the whole scene is ruined ? How can anybody take it seriously with that absurd music being played ? That's the sort of music to suggest home-sickness, or mother-love, or something." Whereupon Lord Shortcake said, " By George, old man ! An Idea ! Why not interpolate a line or two to explain the music ? Why shouldn't the crook pause as he is about to blow the safe and say, ' Ah, my dear old mater ' ? Some-

thing like that, eh ? " Broodie swore silently and walked away.

IX

Once — and once only — Lord Shortcake was put in charge of the off-stage noises. The play was a love story, and included a thunderstorm. My master was given a poker and a big sheet of tin, and taught how to do distant thunder, and then how to suggest thunder close at hand. But on the night of the production he became confused in his cues. The heroine had just said, " How still is the summer night, Arthur, in this remote arbour. One could hear a pin drop." At that moment Lord Shortcake gave the sheet of tin the works. He fairly belaboured it, and all sounds on the stage were drowned, while the audience rocked with laughter. In the next act the hero said, " Mélanie, how close the air is today. Ah, didn't I hear distant thunder ? " And at that moment my master pressed the motor-horn which should have been heard in the first act.

X

My dear old master tried his hand, once in a while, at almost everything connected with the theatrical productions at the Manor. I shall never forget the occasion when he took charge of the stage lighting. The lights swung and jumped all over the stage. On this occasion we had a well-known actress down from London, and do what she could, she was unable to get into the limelight. Everybody else got the light full in the face from time to time, but she remained in shadow. She angrily glared up at Lord Shortcake, high in the wings, and he, forgetting that a moving scene was in progress, shouted loudly, " What is it, my dear ? Anything wrong ? " Lady Shortcake, in the opposite wing, signalled to him to keep quiet, but he shouted even more loudly, " What is it, my love ? Speak up ! "

XI

When Lord Shortcake acted as prompter there was always trouble. He interpreted the slightest pause as a sign that somebody had forgotten the part, with the result that his resonant interruptions gave the impression that he was playing all the parts in the play, though invisible. This was all the more annoying because my old master rarely spoke in quiet tones. And he obviously thought that the prompter should shout his promptings; so that his voice was nearly always louder than the voices of the company. Add to this that he frequently lost his place in the script, and shouted the wrong words to the wrong player. I remember once, during a scene in which a mother was reproving her son for his extravagance, there came a pause. She had just said: "Is it horse-racing, Paul?" when my master's voice was heard bellowing: "Sugar, Mrs. Earle? Two lumps?"

XII

It was Lord Shortcake's custom to give a regular banquet to the performers every year, after the play had been produced. He himself toasted them in a short speech, which never varied. I can almost hear him now. "Ladies and gentlemen, it has ever been my aim to season the rigours of country life with a pinch or two of Thespian frivolity. The Swan of Avon has said, 'The whole world is a stage'. Allowing for exaggeration, one may say that there is an actor — or shall I say actress — ha! — in the heart of every man. Well, here in our small corner we do our damnedest to make the words of the Swan come true. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the toast, the Shortcake Dramatic Society, coupled with the names of all its members." After that a village girl presented a bouquet to Lady Shortcake, with a curtsey, and my mistress said, "Thank you, my dear," and patted her head.

XIII

The untiring efforts of Enoch Broodie to give a more serious turn to our Dramatic Society were stalwartly combated by my old master. "We're not trying to improve ourselves or anyone else," he would say "we're having fun." The idea of applying such a frivolous word to the Drama made Broodie very miserable. And when he pleaded for "Plays with some sort of intellectual content," Lord Shortcake would wag his finger and say, "I smell Ibsen. Not on your life, Broodie. Over my dead body. Damned plays about demented sewage inspectors and whining women." "Have you read any of them?" Broodie would ask. "No need to," my master would reply. "Can smell 'em in the next county. Don't have to be bored stiff to know what would bore you stiff. Modern poppycock. Give me a straightforward play that any fool can understand."

XIV

Once, at Christmas, it was decided to produce a pantomime — "The Sleeping Beauty". But, here again Mr. Enoch Broodie, as the producer, came up against Lord Shortcake's old-fashioned views. Broodie said that nowadays there must be topical songs, and suggested a popular one of the moment, called "Shuffle off to Buffalo". My old master asked what on earth this had to do with the pantomime. "Why Buffalo?" he asked. "Why not Timbuctoo?" Broodie said people liked these interpolations. "Then why not interpolate the Toreador song for the Beauty?" asked my master ironically. He also objected to the suggestion that the fairies should walk about in the auditorium, collecting in little boxes for the Kedgwith Sociological Association. "People expect fairies to fly," he said, "and you can't have fairies hanging from the ends of bits of wire and asking for sixpence. It destroys the illusion."

XV

The suggestion, made as a mere matter of courtesy by our vicar, that Lady Shortcake should play the Queen of the Fairies in the pantomime, was taken quite seriously by my master. He was under no illusion as to her size and weight, even remarking to Mr. Broodie that she would need a wand like a barge-pole. And the way he fussed about the wire that was to be fixed to her, asking anxiously if it would " take the strain ", caused a good deal of silent mirth among the company. When she made a trial flight, my master had a net spread to break a possible fall, and he watched her so anxiously that, as she herself remarked, she might have been a crate of perishable goods being unloaded at the Surrey Docks. However, she made a happy landing, apart from the pushing over of a castle wall, and a slight collision with Mic and Mac, the baron's butlers, which those gentlemen ever after referred to as worse than the fall of a wardrobe.

XVI

Lady Shortcake, during rehearsals for the pantomime, did not take kindly to the part. My mistress was a large, stern lady, who frowned whenever she spoke, owing to an affection of the eyes, so that when she addressed her attendant sprites she looked more like a sergeant-major than a fairy. Also, there was an altercation when my master wanted her to sing " My heart's a-chime in elfin time ". Lady Shortcake had, in her youth, sung drawing-room ballads in a rich and powerful voice, but she refused to oblige him now, and the song was given to the Sleeping Beauty, a very beautiful but rather backward young lady, who squirmed upon her couch of flowers whenever the Prince stooped to deliver the kiss that was to awaken her. My mistress also persuaded Mr. Broodie to delete the line " We tiny folk assembled here ". " I don't *look* tiny, and I don't *feel* tiny," she said gruffly.

XVII

The villagers were allowed in to watch the dress rehearsal of the pantomime, but their criticisms and comments were a little too unrestrained, and that was the last year they were admitted. When the fairies entered, there were cries of " Six to four on the field ", and one impudent youngster greeted the entry of the Fairy Queen (my mistress) with shouts of " Threepence a ton freightage," and " Whoa ! Big Bertha ! " and " Down comes the balloon." What with these comments, and the noise made by my master, who was acting as prompter, there was considerable confusion on the stage. And when the witch, with a hideous cackle, departed on her broom, a voice yelled " Bring us back a vacuum cleaner, Mrs."

XVIII

The pantomime of which I have been writing was certainly the most troublesome production I ever remember. Everything went wrong. Even at the dress rehearsal the Fairy Queen (Lady Shortcake) got her wire entangled with the orchestra. In her powerful voice, at the end of a very beautiful scene, she uttered the words :

> " Now, having summoned all the elfin band,
> Behold, I take my flight to fairyland."

And off she went with a violin hanging from her wand and a harp trailing from her feet. My master, in the wings, shouted, " My love, you've summoned the wrong band," and laughed uproariously.

XIX

No second pantomime was ever produced at Boulton Wynfevers. When the curtain rose on " The Baron's Kitchen ", Lord Shortcake was caught on the stage, and the

opening words of the performance were heard in amazement. For my master cried, " By George ! I oughtn't to be here, eh ? " Amazement was followed by wild laughter. In Act II Lady Shortcake's wire went wrong, and she fell into the orchestra, slap into the lap of the trombonist, while " My baby is some baby " was being sung. The trombone tore her wings, and my master could be heard shouting, " Put her down, man ! " In Act III the real horse came on too soon, ate a fairy lantern, and was sick. Mr. Broodie never came to the Manor again.

XX

My master often used to say, " A man with many hobbies is never dull," and he certainly tried most things in his time. At the age of fifty-six he became interested in Pond Life. But Lady Shortcake had such a strong distaste for anything to do with ponds, except water-lilies and moorhens, that when returning from an exploration of local waters my master and I had to come in through the stables, and enter the house by a back door on tiptoe.

On the evening when there were, to our certain knowledge, seven newts loose about the house, my master turned the drawing-room upside-down, removing cushions and pulling up rugs, on the plea that he had lost a pencil. " Sooner than have the house pulled down on top of me, I'll buy you another," said my mistress. And at that moment a newt sprang from the turn-up of Lord Shortcake's trousers.

My master, of course, pretended not to notice that a newt had sprung from his trousers on to the floor. " What do I see ? " thundered my mistress.

" Where, my love ? " faltered my master, gazing about him innocently. " There, at my feet, a dirty, slimy creature from some filthy pool." " Oh," cried Lord Shortcake, with a light laugh, " *that* ? Why, yes. It looks like a newt." " Shorty, put it out at once." " It doesn't sting,

my love." "*Put it out*, you oaf!" Whereupon his lordship dived for the intruder, knocked over a small table and smashed a vase, and missed his quarry. And at that moment a small boy, cap in hand, said distinctly from the doorway, "Ah've browt 'ee thaaat waaater-raat ah praaamised 'ee."

XXI

I shall not easily forget a dinner-party which took place at Boulton Wynfevers at the height of the Pond Life craze. A water-spider which my master kept in a matchbox on his person escaped from the box during the dinner, and came out of his pocket. It went a-roving, and was soon disporting itself on the lower slopes of Lady Brashwell's ample neck. Imagining that her neighbour at dinner, a retired Colonel with a roguish eye, was taking liberties with her, she tried to look angry. But the spider tickled her neck so thoroughly that she could only giggle stupidly and wriggle her head. Lady Shortcake was disgusted, but my master, who never had much tact, cried out, "Arabella! At your age! Flirting like that!" The Colonel, thinking he had impressed her, smirked fiendishly. Finally the Colonel saw the spider, and plucked it from its playground amid laughter and half-hearted cheers.

XXII

I shall never forget the day when my dear old master, Lord Shortcake, said to me, "Travers, I am thinking seriously of an expedition." I made no reply. It was his invariable custom, in the period of irritation after Goodwood, to plan in detail some journey in search of rare fish. He had a theory that, since fish feed gratefully on what he called, unscientifically, "under-water muck", therefore the banquets of muck to be found in strange tropical waters must of necessity breed a race of super-fish. On this occasion his theory was supported by something he had

come across in a book. It was a description of an enormous goldfish (*Carassius auratus ingens*) only found in Lake Ucayali in the Yahahuaca territory.

So strong was my master's imagination that for days on end he was almost living the expedition. All over the house were travel books from which he memorised passages, and he would declaim suddenly at the dinner-table, in a way that made Lady Shortcake wince. He would butt into a conversation about the local oratorio society with some such phrase as, " Malaria, the sworn foe of the explorer, lurks in every swamp, and strikes suddenly and silently." And once, when asked to write something in the album of the village stationmaster's daughter, he wrote, " Physical strength alone is not enough in native porters. They must be tough-minded, too, and ready to deal with the wild beast by night." The girl's father was flattered, but could make nothing of this.

XXIII

People would call in, to find my master seated at his study table in a sun-hat of his own design. " I wear it constantly to get used to it," he would explain. " It looks very uncomfortable," they would say. " It is," my master would reply. " But I hope to remedy that by growing accustomed to the beastly thing." Then he would show his visitors the map he was making of his proposed route. As he had no idea of map-making, and never drew anything to scale, it was difficult to follow his explanations, which were always accompanied by the muttered words, " Very tricky, *ve*-ry tricky."

XXIV

While the expedition fever was on him, my master would spend hours alone in his study, planning the journey that nobody but himself ever believed would come to anything. For Lord Shortcake had nearly been to Greenland, had almost joined an expedition to the Karakoram, had

been on the verge of going to the tomb of Tamurlane, and had only escaped a journey to the source of the Nile by staying at home. All his fun was in the anticipation and preparation. " I'd have been a born organiser," he said once to Lady Shortcake. But my mistress, who has a muddled mind, said, " Either you are born or you aren't. There can be no question of what you might have been born, because you were, in fact, born, and here you are today, and what you are you are." " I dare say you're right, my love," replied Lord Shortcake.

XXV

On the lawn below the terrace my master set to work to construct a trap for a tiger. I held the diagram in Peploe's *The Art of Trapping Tigers*, and he dug a large hole. Below the surface he placed a strong net, attached to poles at the edges of the hole. Between the poles a thick rope was stretched, and the idea was that when the beast touched the rope as it fell over the edge of the hole the net would contract and close in over it. But the only beast that came that way by night was Lord Shortcake's old friend, the Chief Constable of the County, in search of a drink and some good conversation. . . .

It took a groom and two gardeners to extricate him.

XXVI

While dining at Shortcake Manor our vicar, a young man aflame with missionary zeal, told my master that while there was nothing sinful in going into the wilds in search of rare fish, yet such a journey might prove a mere pagan occasion unless the opportunity were taken to bring civilisation to the natives. " That usually means being eaten by cannibals," said Lady Shortcake acidly. My master said he had already prepared a lecture for a native audience, on how fish are treated in England. " I'm not

thinking specially of fish," said the rector gloomily. " But I am," snapped my dear old master. " One thing at a time, vicar. I can't go about building churches in the swamps, you know. They wouldn't cotton on to the idea."

XXVII

Sir Richard Cardleby, my master's neighbour at Cardleby Hall, was a very facetious gentleman. Hearing of the contemplated expedition, he looked in, much to Lady Shortcake's annoyance, at drinking-time one afternoon. " Ha," he said, " and where's Marco Polo ? " " My husband will be here in a moment," answered Lady Shortcake. " Suppose he's shooting crocodiles somewhere in the library, eh ? " " Oh, of course," said Lady Shortcake. When my master came in Sir Richard jumped up and down, yodelling and shouting, " Big Chief Humpidumpi him want palaver and makum plenty heap big sherry, no can do, honourable white Lord Shortcake." " Oh, rather, Richard," said my master self-consciously. Sir Richard, when handed his sherry, yodelled again, raised his glass to Lady Shortcake, and said, " Where no white foot has ever trod, eh ? "

XXVIII

Another frequent visitor was a silent and melancholy explorer called Cookham-Wryghte. Lord Shortcake's attempts to get him to talk about his experiences were very amusing. He would say heartily during a meal, " Tell us about the hinterland, old fellow, eh ? Were there any pygmies ? Nasty little beggars, I expect." If that brought no reply, he would say, " What would you say was the best place to watch rhinoceroses coming down to drink ? Africa, I suppose ? " or, " Lonely nights in the swamps, eh ? Is it true that a crocodile can swallow a cow ? " Cookham-Wryghte would receive all this with a pale smile,

and only once was he drawn. That was when a girl asked him if he knew the Himalayas. He said, " No. But I nearly went to Kashmir once," and a deaf old Dowager shouted, " I knew them when they were in Lowndes Square. Poisonous people."

XXIX

An earnest woman-writer, who had called at Shortcake Manor on business connected with the local chrysanthemum show, said to my mistress, " I suppose Lord Shortcake is haunted by the smell of decaying vegetation and the tread of stealthy beasts ? " " I hope not," replied that literal-minded lady. " Yet it draws him, as the sea draws a sailor," pursued the writer. " What does ? " asked Lady Shortcake. " The great, free life of the unexplored wilderness," said the writer. " Lord Shortcake," answered my mistress, " has never been further than Eton, and that only once a year. All this about stealthy beasts and decaying vegetation he gets out of books."

Shortly after this there appeared in a weekly paper a pen-picture of " Surely the most modest châtelaine in all England. While her husband was at that moment planning to risk his life in pursuit of knowledge, this gracious lady affected to make no more of it than ' a trip to Eton '. Yet behind that brave face must have lain an anxious heart — anxious for the valiant Englishman who was about to exchange the comfort and ease of his broad acres for the frightful hazards of the unknown hinterlands."

When Lady Shortcake read this out at tea, my master said, " Hang it all, I feel as if I'd already returned from the thing." " That's the best way to feel," said my mistress.

XXX

There came a moment in all my master's projects for foreign travel when he would say, " Well, there we are.

All plans complete. Nothing to do but start, Travers, eh ? " And that was always the moment when I knew we should not go. This expedition to Lake Ucayali was no exception. And when, one night at dinner, Lord Shortcake said to my mistress, " Well, my love, everything's done. We can start at any moment now," she replied with a sigh of contentment. " Now we can settle down to normal," she said. " What do you call normal ? " asked my master. " No crocodile pits, or whatever they are, on the lawns," said Lady Shortcake. " No pith helmets at dinner, and no counting of native porters in your sleep."

My master was always on the defensive as soon as he had called off an expedition. On this occasion, seeing a satirical smile on his wife's face, he said, " Why anybody should think it worth while to make a long and dangerous journey in search of a rare fish beats me." " My love," replied Lady Shortcake, " nobody ever did think it worth while but you." " Bah," said my master, " you all encouraged me, until I lost my head. I might by now be lying dead in a swamp. Did that ever occur to you ? " " Certainly not, my dear, because we all knew you weren't going." " Then why did you suppose I did all that preparatory study and organisation ? " " My love," said Lady Shortcake tenderly, " when I see a child dressing up to play Indians I don't imagine it is going to be scalped in the wilds of Canada."

Even when it was obvious to all that the expedition was abandoned, Lord Shortcake would now and then return to it, as though in self-defence. Sometimes that absurd sun-hat would appear on his head in mid-winter. And one morning Lady Shortcake found him standing with one foot firmly planted on the head of the tiger-skin rug in his library, and in his right hand a gun. " Good shot," said her ladyship coldly.

" The Age of the Common Man "

The bell was again rung by " Towzer's Threepennorth " the other day with a letter about giving the poor enough to eat after the war.

The vulgar word " enough " was expressed by the delicate phrase " quantitative standards based on scientific knowledge applied to the measurement of minimum human requirements ". " Measurement " is good. It suggests that the human guinea-pigs of this experiment in the higher nutrition will have one standard appetite, to be satisfied in the laboratory by a chemical formula.

I can see a row developing between the scientists and the Socialists when the time comes for one or the other, or both, to take over the application of standard nutrition to the entire nation, as a reward for having won a war for freedom.

What the Dog said

> " After all, if dogs were able to tell us exactly what they think of us, we might not regard the relationship as quite the ideal thing we think it now."—(Letter to daily paper.)

Yes. I knew a lady who had an Aberdeen terrier, and one day, as they were sitting by the fire, the terrier, much to her surprise, said : " Look here, I'm sick of all this."

" All what, Mupsy ? " asked the lady.

" Oh, all this lying about and being occasionally sent out for a walk with that stinking fool of a chauffeur. Why don't you ever talk to me about art ? "

" Mupsy ! And I thought you were so happy ! "

" Bilge, you old humbug ! You never cared one way or the other. Anyhow, I'm fed up, and I'm leaving."

So saying, the dog ran out of the house.

In Darkest Ealing

" As the train left Ealing Common," says a story in my newspaper, " a knife flew past the head of one passenger and stuck a moment in the floor between two people."

The humdrum explanation might be that a circus knife-thrower was trying his aim to amuse some foolish girl. But the more romantic and more probable explanation is that one of the lawless secret societies of Ealing, some local *mafia*, is out again. That is the opinion of a Southall brigand who was interviewed. These men live in caves in the hinterland, only venturing into Ealing and Acton to haunt one of the sinister cafés which abound in these parts. It all reminds one of the South Norwood blood-feud.

Financial Notes

The continued upward movement in the bank-note rate to a peak level is due to a renewed lack in the demand for currency. This tendency can be countered by writing up increased loans, but this generally leads to a period of inflation. It is therefore probable that the more conventional method of controlling the issue of notes will be adopted. The danger of this is a sudden burst of selling. But this can be countered by the adoption of a note-unloading policy.

In Passing

At the moment when grave concern is being shown about the difficulties of getting foreigners to understand the English language, a word of gibberish is being repeated — I have just seen it in a leading article. It is the word " triphibian ", which demonstrates the difficulty of getting the English to enderstand foreign languages.

Joke for Airmen

They are saying in Italy that when the Storch flies over a house it drops a little Mussolini down the chimney.

Beauty's Knell

Who Plucked Cook's Eyebrows Queries Expert. In an account of a manicure service, by a team of beauty specialists, for Army kitchens, I read that "There will be no blood-red varnish for the cookhouse".

That sounds to me like a whack on the snout for our old and tedious friend "Glamour". It looks as though there will soon be no backless gowns in the scullery. No more swooning languorously over the saucepan, no more sinuous movements 'twixt sink and stove, no more reclining on tiger-skin rugs at the oven door.

Wrong Approach

> "In some cases it is interesting for an artist to 'touch up' a picture after many years."—(Morning paper.)

Yes. But not to the extent of putting a brown bowler on each of 33 heads in portraits. This was done in despair by a man who painted romantic, emphatic portraits of contemporary men and women, without any success. After years of toil and effort he sent in the 33 touched-up portraits to the Academy, calling them the "Oldham Athletic Football Team at Sunset". Since there were 18 women in evening dress and a baby among the pictures, all were rejected.

Nothing to do with Me

> "Good brown eyes set back well apart between a straight, delicate nose."—(Description of heroine.)

"What a face!" cried the onlookers. "Any squinting necessary," they added, "will probably be done by the nostrils."

"One wonders," mused a friend of the family, "whether she smells things before she sees them."

Honest Effort

An old peer recently decided to take a more active part in political life. A friend, hearing this, said, "Well, you must try to mix a bit with the people—get to know them, Why, I don't suppose you've ever been inside a bus."

The peer admitted this. But next day he got into a bus and sat down, gazing stolidly in front of him. When the conductor approached, he said in a loud, firm voice, and without turning his head, "143 Belgrave Square."

Tail-piece

"That's a gland idea, doctor," as the Chinaman replied to an offer of rejuvenation.

'Twenty Years of Uproar"

Since so few people seem to have read my musical reminiscences, *Twenty Years of Uproar*, I shall from time to time print extracts.

During my musical career I rubbed shoulders with so many famous people that I wonder there is any skin left on my upper arms. Enrico Salvolatelli, my first teacher in Milan, always said to me, "Every small violinist carries a conductor's baton in his knapsack." And I invariably replied, "Yes, maestro, and a singer marches on his stomach." In those days Gorgonzola (Emile's little Italian half-brother) was the rage of Milan, and I was once taken to play the violin to him. "What is that you are playing?" he asked. I told him it was Calamari's "O Bel Paese". And there was a moment of embarrassed silence on Gorgonzola's part.

While looking through some old newspaper cuttings I found this: "The choice of Signor J. B. Morton to conduct the Smetana festival at Leitomischl was a daring

one, since this conductor has made his reputation by unorthodox methods of conducting. Musical purists doubtless found his reading of ' Die Laager von Wallenstein ' a little bold, since he did not scruple to turn to the audience with a grin every now and then, as though to say, ' Isn't this grand ? ' The climax of the evening arrived, however, when it was discovered that the trombonist was slowly drinking beer from his instrument, instead of playing it. Signor Morton seized the instrument and drank what was left. It is doubtful if this is what the composer of ' Wallenstein's Laager ' had in mind when he wrote his music."

Magda Klingendumpf, whom we called the coloraturaliuraliaddy soprano, had an awkward sense of humour. At a concert in the Kursaal at Ostend I went into the wings to lead her on for her song. I heard laughter, and, turning, saw that she had come on from the opposite side of the stage, to make a fool of me. On another occasion, at the Salle Pleyel in Paris, I was leading her on by the hand, when she suddenly slapped my hand and withdrew her own, pretending to look coy. It made me feel a frightful fool, especially as she whispered, in a voice that could be heard in Rambouillet, " Not here, maestro, not here ! "

Treasure Trove

How often the sense of humour seems to depart from men when they write verse. A morning paper quoted the other day lines written about Nelson by Robert Bridges They end thus :

> " As he standeth in stone, aloft and alone,
> Sailing the sky, with one arm and one eye."

How in the name of all that is preposterous can such verse have satisfied the critical faculty of Robert Bridges ? Read the lines aloud.

One of my favourite bits of verse — I cannot be bothered to look it up — goes something like this :

The mountain sheep are fleeter,
But the valley sheep are fatter,
We therefore deemed it meeter
To carry off the latter.

The much-laughed-at last line of " Enoch Arden " is not very funny. A " costly funeral " would have been a matter of great importance to the people of the place, and a sign of love and respect.

Goering and Streatley

". . Those riverside semi-Fascists. . . ."—(Evening paper.)

Captain Foulenough

They were sitting round the dinner-table at the Hall, after a good day's hunting. Several men were discussing an old family horse of their host, which had got beyond its hunting days. " It's very sad," said one man, " to see the poor old thing growing old," and with his sleeve he wiped a furtive tear from his eye and gulped down some more port. Into the active brain of Foulenough darted one of those dirty little ideas which make him what he is. " Nowadays," he said cheerfully, " even the oldest and unhappiest horse can be made happy." All the faces brightened. " There is a home for them, with every comfort and luxury," continued the Captain. " No more lonely misery in a damp field. They have companionship and care."

" Could you put us on to this place, old man ? " asked the host, choking back a sob. " Who ? I ? " asked Foulenough with feigned indifference. Their eager eyes bored holes in him. " I could manage it," said the Captain. " I have some influence there. Fees are rather high, of course." " A whip round ! " cried the host, and into the

centre of the table rained notes and hastily scribbled cheques. With apparent reluctance Foulenough gathered the kitty into his large hands and filled his wallet. He then sat back to enjoy his port. Later, in his bedroom in the east wing, he totted up the gains, and decided that he could afford to return to London first-class the next day for a week of fun. "We have all been touched by your kindness," said his host, as he bade him goodbye. "I know you have," said Foulenough.

Poached Horse on Toast

"British people don't eat horse-flesh much."—(Morning paper.)

Much is the operative word. When I was Whipper-In to the Gornaway we never ate a horse until he had got to the stage of refusing his jumps. And, of course, we never called the ensuing dish "horse". It was generally Gigot de Pré Salé Montélimar. I remember the row at a Hunt Ball when a lady who had sent up her plate for a second portion (with greens) complained that she had got a bit of the very ribbon she had tied round the neck of Devilish Dora at the last meet at Whackaway Manor.

After being Whipper-In to the Gornaway I became Whipper-Out to the Bicester. Here it was very different. We ate horses, hounds, foxes, and anything that was going. We were a tough lot. So were they.

One Thing and Another

There will be among my readers more than one who will receive with singular indifference the news that Abelard has been dead 800 years this month. Yet everybody talks familiarly about the *Letters of Abelard and Héloïse*, and says that their story is one of the imperishable love stories of the world.

The remarkable thing is that the memory of it has

survived. For there are only eight letters, and they are by no means the modern man's or woman's ideas of what a love-letter should be — though in one of those written by Héloïse there is a very saucy story about Socrates, coming most unexpectedly among graver matters.

On what, by the way, does the legend of Helen's peerless beauty rest? On a couple of lines in the *Iliad*: And what of idyllic Arcady, in reality a beastly, barren, rocky district? The legend of Arcadia as an earthly paradise, as Mahaffy discovered, was created by a Neapolitan literary gent named Sannazaro in the sixteenth century. He wrote an imaginary account of a beautiful Arcady in order to soothe himself after an unhappy love affair.

Borax

Borax writes: "The orthodox military theory of invasion by sea is that it is easier to land on open beaches where there are no cliffs than in places where there are no beaches, and where tall cliffs climb perpendicularly from deep water. But the element of surprise allows of unorthodox methods. No enemy would expect a landing where none was possible. It should therefore be remembered that such a landing, while no doubt impossible in itself, would catch the enemy at a great disadvantage. If the invaders could not get up the cliffs, could the defenders get down them? Such a holding operation might give time for other landings in more favourable places."

Tail-piece

Official spokesmen in touch with authoritative circles are denying the ill-founded report that the Minister of Health is to open the first two Argentine eggs for workers next month.

Oh, I say, look Here!

Remarking the other day that dog does not eat dog, a literary gent received the warm reply, " No, but it eats rat."

More Fiddlemeree

I read, with profound horror, that " every soldier in the British Army is to be taught all about current affairs — events, policies and personalities ". With even profounder horror I read that one of the educators said, " *Moral* depends on knowledge."

This assumption that the soldiers of the past, who knew nothing of all this nonsense, were inferior in *moral*, is a little bit too thick. I suppose the Army Council imagines that a man who can spell Harold Laski, or knows the capital of Luxemburg, will make a better fighter than one without these highly useful accomplishments.

Milk

The great drive to make milk more incomprehensible has started, and many cows, confronted with a pail of dephosphatised, heat-treated, semi-pasteurised, methylene-blue milk, are shouting, " That's not what I gave ! "

More and more cows are being kept in laboratories, so that they can remain under observation while eating their synthetic grass and chewing the new hygienic, non-porous, retaminated, oxylene cuds. It has been discovered by several of the apothecaries and soothsayers that milk need no longer taste or look like milk, and that if the small dairyman cannot afford all the expensive machinery for preparing stale milk, with dead germs instead of live ones in it, then he cannot expect the public to put up with his fresh milk, which has never got into the hands of the chemists.

Considering the Possibility

With a savage vindictiveness which bodes ill for the spirit of business enterprise, a newspaper says that since the identity of the man behind the whisky racket is known to the authorities, " they are considering the possibility of taking action against him ". It is lucky for him that he did not do anything really reprehensible, *e.g.*, omit to fill up a form or to stand in a bus queue.

Try This

" He had used ink to stain his brown boots black."—(News item.)

And all his friends said, " His boots tell black lies."

(To remove tartar from a horse's teeth rub them with shallots.)

Without wishing to Boast

Fructuoso Perez, who lived in the Calle Mayor in Pamplona, near the old artillery barracks, and who made the best *botas* in Navarre, used to say that men who drink out of a goatskin become sure-footed in the mountains.

This remark came into my mind while I was reading an article by a human being, describing how unwise it is to drink while walking. That, of course, depends on whether (i) you are a man or a mouse, (ii) are out to have fun, or merely to make a business out of pleasure. In the great days before priggish self-consciousness became a religion, and when a mountain was nothing but a large mole-hill, my companions and I used to drink from our goatskins whenever we felt like it — good, rich, black, nourishing wines as strong as a horse. Wine was made for the soul as well as the body — and so were mountains.

Vixere fortes post Agamemnona . . .

I wonder what would have happened to any earnest milksop who had decried the use of the goatskin in the

days when I and my companions were worshipped from the Perthus to Roncesvalles, and back again from Choldocogagna above the Bidassoa to Brouilla on the Tech. On that immortal march with the young Lion of Aragon which ended with him surrounding Santa Cilia single-handed, while I forced my way in and beat down with my bare hands the great oak-door of the Fonda of the Winds? Or on that heroic journey of Timothy Shy and myself up through the snow and down into Andorra? In those days we were covered with hair, slept on rocks, sang all night, brawled and fought to our hearts' content, even with each other, and could have eaten and digested paving-stones. I trust I have said enough, without seeming to boast, to give you a taste of our quality.

"Yes, indeed . . . Yes . . . Yes"

My responsible position on the *Rochdale Observer* tamed me a bit. I learnt to lower my voice and speak diffidently, as though I were not sure of my own opinions. As editor I could not brawl in public, or sing loudly when the mood took me, or break a man's head because I disliked his face. I learned to sleep in a bed, like any city fop, to smile insincerely, to agree with fools for the sake of peace, and to drink tiny, anaemic wines out of idiotic glasses made for gnats to sip from. But in my ravenous heart the old fires burned, and there were still times when I went off across the world and came to rest in the happy places — particularly in that squat house by a torrent, where they still show the huge nails I drew out of the main door with my teeth.

VII

MRS. McGURGLE

Further Chronicles of Marine House

Atta la belle McGurgle !

A SMALL contretemps might have marred the almost ceremonial reopening of Marine House yesterday. A man in what Mrs. McGurgle described as " an ostentatious felt hat " booked a room, and described himself on the form as a bee-keeper. Mrs. McGurgle pounced. " I take it," she said, " that you do not propose to keep any bees here." The stranger removed his hat with an angry sweep, and said, " Is there anything derogatory in bee-keeping, mum ? " " There is a time and place for everything," retorted the stalwart landlady. " Well, I don't carry my bees about with me," said the stranger sarcastically. Mrs. McGurgle softened somewhat, and the stranger added, " As far as I am concerned, my lady, you are the only honey in this dump." Despite herself, the landlady smiled, and a mulberry tint spread over her damask cheeks. " Go on, there ! " she replied, with a massive simper.

At the evening meal a lugubrious young man with a fair moustache said out of the blue, " I hear a boiled egg calling to its young." A deathly silence greeted this sally, which was not of the kind appreciated at Marine House. The young man has not spoken since, and is expected to be frozen out of the house within a week.

Mr. Powder is put in his Place

Mrs. McGurgle was personally dealing out one teaspoonful of marmalade to each boarder at breakfast, when

a commercial gentleman named Powder said, "Why not use a salt spoon?" "What," retorted the McGurgle, "are you hinting? Pray speak out, Mr. Powder. If you desire to suggest that I am a fifth columnist of the black market, I here and now inform you that marmalade does not grow on trees in these days. If one attempts to conserve supplies, that does not mean that one is a quiserling, not by a long chalk, Mr. Powder. Your sarcasms fall flat to the ground in my ears, and a little more of your sauce and you will forfeit the extra spoonful per Saturdays which is the traditional reward at this establishment for keeping a civil tongue in your head."

Poor Mr. Powder grew red and hung his head. The boarders sniggered.

There was an ugly scene recently when Mr. Fetlock sent back his slice of mutton, on the plea that he couldn't cut it. "I cannot exchange this bit," said the McGurgle, "you've bent it." "Then put it on the salvage dump with the other iron bedsteads," said the ironical Fetlock

Mrs. McGurgle writes to me from Marine House as follows: ". . . And the lifting of the seaside banns has now brought an influx of clientele. I am trying to establish contact with some of my old boarders. I would be glad if you could help me, but not by sending any disreputable characters like that Captain Foulenough. He came with a recommendation from you, and in 24 hours he had cleared the gas meter and telephone box, proposed to a respectable married boarder whose husband was in steam carpet beating, played what Mr. Stulloe called 'questionable poker' with more aces than were thought strictly possible, and tried to dance a tango with me in my own kitchen. While I live, the standard of Marine House shall not be lowered. . . ."

Mrs. McGurgle gets an Egg

The latest arrival at Marine House brought a hen with him, and craved permission to put it in the back-yard. Mrs. McGurgle reluctantly consented on being promised the first egg. But the bird turned out to be broody, and the owner became the butt of the boarders. " Shall we have that egg poached or fried ? " asked Fred Parsley maliciously. " I prefer an omelette," said the Bulstidge girl. After two days the bird became normal again, entered the house in search of warmth, and laid an egg on the second-floor landing. There it was found by old Mrs. Pasham, who, never having seen an egg on a landing, went into hysterics and swore it was a little bomb, which would explode at a touch. Having calmed her, Mrs. McGurgle bore the egg away in triumph to the kitchen, boiled it and ate it. Next day the bird died, and the owner departed. Upon the McGurgle's face was a self-satisfied smile.

The Egg on the Landing

Mrs. McGurgle writes : ". . . I fear that your description of this odd event may lead perspective clientele to imagine that the laying of eggs on landings is a normal occurrence at Marine House. This is not so, and the eccentric gentleman to whom the bird belonged made adequate apology before leaving. The late Mr. McGurgle would never have an animal in the House, with the exception of our cat Malcolm and a parrot which said, ' Oh, what a dirty trick.' The parrot bit a gas-inspector, and we had it destroyed. As for Malcolm, he went off one August day and was found dead in a dustbin in Fawgus Road, and he was much missed. Since my husband's decease no animal has crossed my threshold until this hen arrived — if I except the frog which got in at a ground-floor window in damp weather and made Miss Brinker

scream so loudly that the fire brigade came and smashed the window and carried her off in her neglijay. . . ."

DEAR SIR,—How opportune was that egg laid on the landing! What a publicity stunt! No other landlady would have thought of such a thing. But let Mrs. McGurgle remember this. Such tricks may increase her clientele temporarily, but the kind of boarder who books a room merely because an egg has been laid on a landing is not the steady type which returns in fair weather or foul. In the long run it is those houses which are run without sensationalism that retain their customers, and all this egg-laying fuss is but a short-term, catch-penny policy. Mrs. McGurgle is clever, I admit, but unless she can reveal an egg on the landing every morning, lack of custom will stale her impudent variety.—Yrs. truly, M. P. GARSTANG.

DEAR SIR,—Mr. Garstang's wicked assumption that I arranged for the hen to lay on the landing is as unpremeditated as it is insulting. I had hoped the incident closed, but since idle tongues are still a-wagging, as wag they will, I must repeat that nobody was more surprised than myself by the discovery of the egg, and he who imputes vulgar motives only shows the depths of his own mind. Though it is easy to make fun of a widow, it is not what I would call the act of a gentleman. If the cap fits, let Mr. Garstang put it in his pipe and smoke it.—Yrs. in indignation, FLORENCE McGURGLE.

DEAR SIR,—What on earth does it matter where a hen lays an egg in these days? Is Mrs. McGurgle's first floor landing sacred? That lady should have been only too glad to be the indirect means of increasing Britain's breakfast-table delicacies, instead of adopting an attitude of disapproval, as though egg-laying on inhabited premises were a disgrace. If every landing could show one egg per day there would be fewer disgruntled faces at boarding-

house tables, and I, for my part, as proprietress of an old established house, would gladly welcome a rain of eggs in every room. If you will put me in touch with the gentleman who owned the hen, I will let him a room cheap, with the use of the landing for that sporting bird.—Yrs. truly, PHOEBE BASKETT.

Lunch at Marine House

It did not escape the notice of the boarders at Marine House that the gentleman who had called Mrs. McGurgle "honey" got the only potato without a flaw at lunch. This gentleman's name was Twivens, and every time he looked at his hostess he smacked his lips and said, "My word!" The result was that Mrs. McGurgle became nervous, lost her grip, and poured cold gravy over the tapioca. This elicited a cry of "Yoicks!" from Mr. Fred Parsley, and the Bulstidge girl laughed so hysterically that a hearty old warrior, thinking she was choking, caught her a whack in the small of the back which sent her crashing forward on to a chipped cabbage-dish. With greens clinging to her contorted features, she shrieked an unprintable word and left the room. Mrs. McGurgle then begged to remind the assembled company that they were not at a circus.

An Old Tradition

The hanging of the mistletoe at Marine House is always an embarrassing business. This year, more than ever. There is only one pretty girl in the establishment, the telephone operator in No. 4. It is obvious that every male would like to be the first to salute her beneath the bough. But every lodger knows that the first kiss belongs by mere courtesy, to the portly châtelaine.

Every year Mrs. McGurgle enacts the same little comedy, and the lodgers join in. "Take care, Mrs. McGurgle! You are in danger!" "Danger? How?

What do you mean, Mr. Snackett ? " " Er — why, you are standing right under the mistletoe." " Oh ! My goodness. So I am ! What a silly I am ! Oh — Mr. Snackett, please ! You *wicked* man ! . . . Mr. Grape, how *could* you ! . Why Mr. *Burple*, you're as bad as the rest of them ! "

But this year their hearts are not in the business, and as each man brushes the brow of the McGurgle one eye is on the pretty girl who laughs near by. And well the McGurgle knows it. For as the last in the queue, Mr. Trowney, tries to side-step, she cries, " Why, surely *you* are not going to take advantage of my position, Mr. Trowney?" And, of course, poor Trowney has to fall into line, and go through the dismal routine. " Mr. Trowney, I'm *surprised* at you, and you such a *quiet* one : but they say still waters run deep."

The front door bangs. The pretty girl has gone out. The lodgers gape at each other in disappointment. And the fair McGurgle withdraws, well contented.

" *Twenty Years of Uproar* "

In the second act of " Yolanda " Emilia Rustiguzzi had to lean from her casement and throw her lover a flower. She leaned all right, but got stuck in the aperture, owing to her broad shoulders and Herculean torso. Her efforts to free herself brought down a quantity of scenery and shook the entire stage. There were stage-carpenters hauling on her legs from behind, and she was growing breathless with rage. The stage crowd of courtiers caught hold of her arms and tried to pull her down. Between the two sets of helpers she was almost torn in two. As one critic wrote : " Since the performance was more like a

tug-of-war for a police benefit than a performance of opera, I leave the criticism to our sports experts."

The other day a musical critic remarked that a certain singer did not seem to be thinking of what he was singing. That is an old complaint. Singers become absent-minded.

Broccoli, while embracing a prima donna in a duet, would often scribble catchwords or draw sketches on her back, with the bit of charcoal he always carried for luck. And once during one of those prolonged Wagnerian frenzies, he grew so tired of the screaming soprano that, inadvertently, he opened his mouth wide in a noisy yawn. The orchestra thought some instrument had smashed, until the stage manager, caught off his guard, burst into hearty laughter in the wings. Before the yawn was over a well-directed brioche had lodged in the singer's capacious maw, and he began to eat it while the diva continued to make heavy weather.

One night at Covent Garden a burly Wagnerian heroine, covered in false hair and sham armour, forgot her spear. And that made her forget her cue. " I've forgotten my cue," she cried in the wings, while they hunted for her spear. Then a mysterious hand slew two birds with one stone, and she found herself pushed on to the stage with a billiard cue in her hand. Cries of " Chalk it, Baby " and " In off the aria " drowned the opening bars of her song.

" *Impeding the War Effort* "

A meeting of the War Cabinet, as a journalist of the Left sees it, would make a good scene for a revue.

(A crowd of men with side-whiskers and receding foreheads, wearing old school ties and dressed for polo, are seated round a table, sipping port laid down by their great-grandfathers. There is a crisis on 12 battle fronts.)

1st Voice: Aw-haw, d'you know, old chap, what? Had any huntin', shootin', or fishin' lately? By George!

2nd Voice: War rather cramps one's style, sort of, what? By Jingo!

3rd Voice: What war?

1st Voice: He means this jolly old war, Chollie.

4th Voice: All these modern weapons are no bally use. Too many damned tanks and planes for my cup o' tea.

Voices: Heah, heah! Jolly good show, sir. Played, sir. Oh, good egg!

1st Voice: Mind if I have 40 winks?

2nd Voice: Meetin' adjourned, gentlemen

They are not Really Dirty

What now, brutalised populace? If you are looking for entertainment, do you know that, according to the Smoke Abatement Council, 47,841,973 tons of soot fell on London during the last financial year? Nor does that alarming figure include other kinds of dirt.

It has often been asked whether the abolition of dirt would stop the English habit of lying in hot water until the body is enfeebled and the brain muzzed. Personally, I think not. The English do not have all those baths because they are dirty, but because they are afraid of being thought to be dirty. And to such a pass is it coming that a house is not considered comfortable or fit to be lived in today unless it has a private bathroom for every occupant and every visitor, so that a foreigner, uninstructed, might be excused for imagining that the richer an English family is, the dirtier.

Those with a dozen or twenty baths must have a swimming-pool as well, to refresh them after their soaking in hot water. No wonder so many of them go about dressed up as yachtsmen. Their horizon is bounded by water, water, water.

Big Fizziness

" And what about the winter champaign ? "
—(Evening paper.)

" Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble," quoted the charming actress as she returned for the tenth time to the question of getting another two dozen out of the stockbroker.

Counter-proposal

" Why not banish that feeling of nausea by not reading Miss Thingamegig's new novel ? "—(Advt.)

Tim O'Shenko

Many years ago an Irishman named Timothy O'Shea from Carrickfergus opened a hardware shop in Omsk. It was known as Timothy O'Shea and Co., which soon became Timothy O'Sheanco, and then Tim O'Shenko.

[Tomorrow : The O'Mars of Khayyam.]

Marginal Note

The tiff between the Ministry of Information and the B.B.C. reminds me of one of those rows at a girls' school, when Edna, hockey captain, has cheeked the music mistress, and been told to stay in and copy out twenty times the words and music of " Hark, Hark the Lark ", thus missing the match against St. Eggfrith's.

The appointment of Mr. Foot is described as a long-therm policy. [Special joke for gasfitters and coke-haulers.]

In Passing

Poor Fröken Garbo, who was Romance to millions, is now as earthy as Hackenschmidt, or Madrali the Terrible Turk. There is something pitiful in the thought of

renowned leading ladies coming to their old age, and, instead of playing silver-haired mothers, being forced to earn their living as weight-lifters at provincial fairs. For when Mrs. Dietrich is too old to fight, and Butch Garbo too old to wrestle, that is all that will be left for them. And what news of that promising cruiser-weight, Dame Shirley Temple? And innocent Miss Durbin, the Oklahoma Nightingale, with enough dynamite in each fist to bust the Dolomites wide open.

[Enter the fairies Grogblossom and Quartbottle. They stand silently contemplating the scene, while their boots fill slowly with lard.]

Military Music

" It was the schooner Hesperus
That sailed the wintry sea,
And the skipper had taken Désirée Cohen
To bear him company."
(SOUSA'S " March of the Hesperus ".)

Some hold that military music of the old kind is out of place in a war that is so largely an affair of machinery.

Such people have not gone as far as to suggest that tanks should be led by an electric gramophone playing Bartok or Honegger. In the fatuous days, when it had not occurred to fools that we might be left with neither guns nor butter, the bands were silenced, and the intellectuals blathered. But now that we are waking up, what about some military music?

Blue-print for Egg-powder

" Experiments are being conducted at Scunthorpe to induce hens to lay dehydrated austerity utility priority egg-powder essence. If the experiments succeed there will be no need, after the war, to go back to real eggs, which do not contain sufficient vitamin N."—(Beachcomber News Agency.)

Borax on the War

Borax writes: "If we add up the total tank losses of the Germans on all the fronts we find them to be 26,384 to date. Germany started the war with 12,361 tanks, and has since built 11,011. Therefore not only has Germany no tanks left, but must build 3022 before she begins to have any more."

[Rest of article, proving that Germany has no men either, censored, to avert complacency.]

Hy-Brasail

Geographomanes and palaeontologophiles say that Madagascar was once part of the African continent. But they say that every island was once part of a mainland. And who shall contradict them?

With coast erosion rampant, at the rate of some four inches every 3000 years, it is quite possible that in the dim days of pre-history, when men spoke a language of grunts understood only by amateur scientists, the Indian Ocean decided to do some erosion, in order to chew the African cud. By constant gnawing it detached an island. Hence Madagascar, with the Mozambique Channel separating it from its old home. One day the island itself will be eroded and turn up somewhere else. And archaeologophobes will say that it was once part of Peacehaven.

The world's most remote island is not Tristan da Cunha, but Hy-Brasail. It is not easy to find. You can see it from the Galway or Mayo Coast, but you never can be quite sure that what you are seeing is not mere mist. Many people have set sail westwards in search of it. Some have found it. Some have never been seen again. Some have returned as restless as when they set out. I once saw it from a hill in the wild barony of Erris, but I remembered Chesterton's reply to Yeats — "The world's more full of laughter than you can understand."

Gerald Griffin sang of this island, and of a man who bartered his happy life for a vision of it, and set out westwards, and never more saw the smoke going up from his own home.

Flower Border

they took away the ecstatic parishioner
down dead avenues of sweet betraying
for fingers to the savage hour
bequeath no clothing worse than refusal
swagger and clash our doors without end
under the tooth of time

(STANLEY PLANK.)

Sloganberry Pie (or "*It serves you anthracite right*")

"I say, Lady Vi, isn't it topping that Lady Dot now has to spend so much time in the dark? With that face, I mean — eh?"

"Yes, Lady Marjorie, but there is a serious side to this. It's a question of a short-therm policy."

"Yes. Our peace therms, sort of. One man's meter is another man's poison."

"Yes. Scuttle your coal. Too many cokes spoil the broth."

"You know, Lady Vi, we shall all be an anthracite better off if we save fuel."

Tail-piece

"Every bit of charred coal could be burnt twice."—(Letter to paper.)

There's no fuel like an old fuel.

Borax

Borax writes: "According to latest official information, the Germans have a total of 316 Divisions for use on all

fronts. These are distributed thus: Russia 217, France 16, Belgium and Holland 14, Norway and Denmark 10, the Balkans 36, Greece 12, Italy 15, Germany 24. This leaves a strategic reserve of minus 28 Divisions. In other words, Germany has about 300,000 less men than she actually has.

Songs of the Moment

A lady sergeant stood in tears
 Beside the canteen door,
And trembled as she heard the jeers
 Of the Army Service Corps.
A Major passing by that way
 Observed the piteous scene,
And paused, and raised his service cap,
 And cried, " What does this mean ? "
 To him she made reply,
 With streaming downcast eye :

REFRAIN

" Love chimes in my lonesome heart
 When the evening shadows steal——"
But the Major politely turned away,
 His nausea to conceal.

Radio News

Hen relays two eggs.

Mushrooms in the Carpathians

One of the artists represented in an exhibition is referred to as " A young telephone operator who once had to live on mushrooms in the Carpathians ". Does not that prove if proof were needed ?

The smart critic will not forget this. He will write, " One is struck by an adroit use of planes and mass effects,

which suggests that she had once lived on mushrooms in the Carpathians ". Or, " Only a telephone operator who had lived on mushrooms in the Carpathians could have such a sense of colour and line ". Or, " Her bold treatment of the more sombre effects forces one to the conclusion that she has lived on mushrooms in the Carpathians ". Or, " The sweep of her style, its very bravura, betray the telephone operator who has a working knowledge of mushrooms in the Carpathians ".

Progress

In writing of certain dancing in a performance of " Comus ", made into a modern ballet, a critic said, " They are able to present in a few graphic actions what it took Milton many words to say ". That seems to open the way to a great saving of time.

" We soon should be able to compress six or seven of Shakespeare's plays into twenty minutes of grimacing and tumbling ", writes " Bubastes " in *The Boiling Horse* (that sprightly journal of the arts). As A. E. Housman might have written :

> " And mime does more than Milton can
> To justify God's ways to man."

Alone with Nature

A cascade of melody from the old larch — in many a ferny dell the shy lesser celandine — A flash of wings announces the arrival of the tiny beercrest — By tilth and loam spring's message, etc. — feathered songsters of this fronded isle, and/or jovial chanticleers of highway and hedge — bits about age-old plough turning up the benignant soil — greystern nesting in old blow-pipe there to lay her mottled eggs — quack-quack from the slime-strewn pond — willow-catkins, etc. Sticky chestnut buds

lambs gambolling on many a lea call in at Campbell's about the smell in the attic snakes sloughing winter skins on sunny uplands.

Prodnose: It seems to me your rough notes have got mixed up with your copy.

Myself: 'Tis no matter. The public likes a glimpse of a writer's workshop.

Odd Occurrence

Is a clergyman justified in baptizing a child with the surname of Sauce, Horseradish? I only ask. I can think of no other way of putting it.

There is always a possibility that, in the confusion of the moment, the child might emerge as Sauceradish Horse. In such a case, would the child's parents have to get the names changed by deed poll to Horseradish Sauce? Otherwise, would the child have to affix the names Sauceradish Horse to all legal documents when he came of age?

I am not unreasonable enough to expect an answer to such questions until the war is over.

And then imagine the moment of embarrassment when, at a lunch, the butler, stooping confidentially, asks, "Horseradish sauce, sir?"

"Yes, that's my name. Somebody want me on the phone?"

"No, sir. I only asked whether you would have some."

"Ha-ha. He *is* some," pipes a stupid guest.

"Is this stuff called after you, Mr. Sauce?" asks the hostess, "Or you after it?"

"You ought to marry a Miss Yorkshire Pudding," interpolates a wit.

Poor Mr. Sauce!

Imagine the effect at a public dinner: "My lords,

ladies and gentlemen, pray silence for Mr. Horseradish Sauce."

Of course, one way of making the name Horseradish Sauce seem less ridiculous would be to place an initial in between thus : Horseradish P. Sauce (or even Horseradish N. Sauce). But it would leave things as bad as they were before to use a hyphen, thus : Mr. John Horseradish-Sauce (or Mr. T. K. Horseradish-Sauce).

" My dear, do you know the Horseradish-Sauces ? "

Reverting to this matter, it should be observed that he might keep secret the full absurdity of the name during his boyhood. But what of falling in love ? The moment must come when the lady says : " Mr. Sauce, what's your Christian name ? " and later, greatly daring, " May I call you Horseradish ? "

" Father, I am engaged to Mr. Sauce." " My darling, what a peculiar name ! What's his Christian name ? " " Horseradish, father." " My love, you mock me. Or is that your pet name for him ? " . . . " Desire the pleasure of your company at the marriage of their daughter Freda to Mr. Horseradish Sauce."

Centenarian sees Train

" Aged 138, old Mrs. Whiggleham, of Arspneigh, avowed that she had never seen a train. Our representative said, ' But sixteen trains pass your window, I am told, every day.' ' Oh,' said this grand old lady, ' are they trains ? Nobody ever told me they was trains. So I didn't know I'd ever seen one. Fancy that now Why, there goes one of them now. I never thought I'd live to see a train." —(Beachcomber News Agency.)

In Passing

Few people know that the town of Odessa was founded in the sixth century by an Irishman, Turlogh O'Dessagh,

a grandson of Aed Mac Ainmire, who was killed at the battle of Moyrath in County Down.

Fiduciary Fun

A city editor announces gravely in thick black type that " the Bank of England note circulation is fast approaching the £1,000,000,000 mark ". But very few people know what to do about it. Add another three noughts, or subtract three, and most people would be none the sillier. If the Bank of England cares to issue another 20,000,000 notes tomorrow, you and I cannot interfere. Is this England then a Democracy ? Bow-wow.

Are Porters' Daughters Old ?

> " An extensive research carried out by Gray and Moshinsky in 1935 at the London School of Economics on the intelligence of 10,000 children showed that seamen's children had very high intelligences, much higher than the children of editors, judges, and solicitors. What is the explanation ? "
> —(Correspondence column.)

The explanation is quite simple. The superior intelligence of seamen's children is due to a gland called the chronial gland, discovered by Wobelberg.

There was a second experiment at the London School of Economics. The 10,000 children carried out an extensive research on the intelligence of scientists.

The really interesting thing about heredity is that the cousins of internal braceplug setters are invariably rounder in the head than the grandparents of average adjusters, tic-tac men, ferret-fanciers, and civil servants. This is due to Numpelmeyer's Law of Occipital Rotundity, later developed by Whipster and Kalomel in their *Psychology of*

Head Measurement, a work that was crowned by the Czech Academy of Comparative Falala, and won the Mrs. Gowbrand Medal for Constructive Bopomology.

What more need I tell you ?

There follows a list of professions for those born under Aldebaran :

Hop-sifting	Slabbering	Soap-roasting
Furze-blowing	Leather-tubbing	Hawking glass
Nettle-stewing	Salting	Girobono
Marpling	Crisping	Rice-twisting
Docking feathers	Piling mustard	Verdigris-grating
Eel-hauling	Gong-whacking	Hiccoughing
Mole-catching	Making skewers	Barrel-strapping
Dormouse-training	Suet-fumbling	Mounseling
Apple-mongering	Clock-a-hock	Curdling malt
Raking dough	Tumbeny	Bagpipe-varnishing
Basting nuts	Pluck-herring	Scraping shovels
Fly-snapping	Webstering	Pipping
Treadling	Jury-dabbing	Jabolongulating
Gulleting	Whelk-stuffing	Driving duskets

Not Cricket

A judge once again complained the other day of the illegibility of a doctor's certificate. In the matter of doctors' handwriting my readers may remember the case of Bach's Dortmund Fugue (Op. 9064), which was proved some years ago to be a prescription written out for an old woman in Düsseldorf who suffered from chilblains. Her doctor, Stralsund, would have laughed loudly if he had known that after his death his prescription would be played all over Europe and hailed by Kootel as " one of the loveliest fugues ever composed ". (See Dischwasser's " A Fugue to the Death ".)

Gee, Mr. Whymper, that's Swell!

The fact that the film people have managed to drag a girl and a love-story even into the picture about Whymper's ascent of the Matterhorn set me trying to think of stories into which it would be impossible to drag a girl. I had forgotten that in the film world nothing is impossible.

I thought first of a film of an Everest Expedition, but obviously one of the Nepalese porters would be the daughter of an English hunting peer in disguise. Failing that, a mysterious white queen would be found in a cave near the crest of the mountain. Dorothy Lamour again

If there is anything more dramatic than Whymper's own account of that July day when he and Croz came up the last two hundred feet of easy snow on to the level ridge which is the summit of the Matterhorn, you may call me Mrs. Dalpyley Nigginwhistle of Slopcourt Manor, Pushley-in-the-Wold. But I fear that the youngsters of today are more stirred by the men who go round and round and round and round a race-track.

Marvels of Science

" I asked for Manchukuo, 6048."
" Soya bean troubled."

Narkover v. *Bludleigh*

The annual football match resulted in a smashing win for Narkover by forty-two goals to nil. The Bludleigh captain never appeared on the field at all, and was found gagged and bound in the games-master's study after the match. Every opportunity was taken by the Narkover supporters to call the Bludleigh players off the field frequently, on the pretence that they were wanted on the telephone. The referee, handsomely tipped before the match by Dr. Smart-Allick himself, blew his whistle for

off-side every time the Narkover goal was in danger. He also, on fourteen occasions, awarded entirely imaginary goals to Narkover.

Any Bludleigh player who strayed too near the touch-line during the game was immediately hauled off the field by Narkover boys and sat on. At the end of the game the opposing team had only three players on the field. Narkover, on the other hand, although starting the game with only sixteen players, finished up with thirty-eight.

The headmaster of Bludleigh, Dr. Snowte, has lodged a protest.

The Nostril Way to Health

My old master Dr. Nostril always used to say that if you want to come down to breakfast with a rosy complexion in the winter you should sleep with your face packed in ice. While dressing you should rub your cheeks vigorously with lumps of ice, to induce a healthy glow and to acquire a feeling of social well-being.

Nostril married (*en seizièmes noces*) Gristlequist Inkslinger, the youngest daughter of Per Inkslinger, the dramatist. They live now in a lovely rectangular house made of steel and glass on the northern shore of Lake Rokaby, in the province of Svansgaard.

Beauty Spot saved

It was Lady Cabstanleigh's. A triangle of black paper worn on her left cheek. It came unstuck and fell to the floor. Young Howland retrieved it.

Tristram and Iseult

The discovery by archaeologists of what is believed to be the site of the palace of King Mark of Cornwall may remind the novelists and dramatists of today that they did not invent the idea of an unhappy marriage.

I account the story of Tristram and Iseult the best of all the great love stories of the world. It has had the advantage of being retold by Joseph Bédier, and it is a tale that will never grow old.

I have often wondered why W. B. Yeats never wrote a play about Tristram and Iseult. I have also wondered whether Matthew Arnold ever read aloud the verses he wrote about the story — and, if so, what he thought of them.

At the Pawnbroker's

A woman of truly enormous size came thundering into the ill-lit shop of a pawnbroker. From under her arm she produced her tiny husband, whom she banged down on the counter.

" We can't give you anything on that — on him," said the pawnbroker.

" He has a ring on his finger, and I can't get it off," roared the woman.

More about Eggs

> " When a member tracks down a wanton egg-collector, he reports to his nearest organising secretary."—(Official of Bird Watchers and Wardens' Association.)

Quite right, too. " Miss Bulber reporting. That clergyman's got away with another skinnet's egg. I caught him with his hand in the nest, but he pleaded the privilege of his cloth, and said the egg would be sold to raise funds to mend the roof of the Girls' Sewing Club."

" *Uneaten and Unashamed.*"—(LIVINGSTONE)

An enterprising Englishman has recorded in a book that there are still at least a million cannibals in the world.

Since he visited all the known tribes of cannibals, my first impulse is to congratulate him on escaping uneaten. When a cannibal chief came to him and said, " I say, look here, you are the second course on our menu tonight," the statistician would reply amicably, " That's all very well, but if you eat me, who is going to prepare the statistical report, for the Statistical Bureau of the League of Nations Interim Statistical Committee, on Cannibalistic Tendencies Among Anthropophagi ? "

Abashed, the chieftain would hang his head, and the cook would substitute for human flesh some baser form of nourishment.

Another Wad of Rubbish

" A mouse ran up a clock and injured the works in a factory yesterday."—(News item.)

" Come down ! " shouted the foreman.

" Dickory, dickory, dock," replied the mouse.

" What ? " bawled the foreman.

" I said dickory, dickory, dock," repeated the mouse.

" Sing it," shouted the foreman.

Whereupon the mouse took a deep breath and let fall a silver cascade of melody. The foreman saw, in a vision, lost youth and all the beauty of the world, and enormous tears splashed down his face. By the time the mouse had run down the clock again, he was sobbing like a child.

Next day he was sacked for incompetence, and the mouse now gets £200 a week on the music-halls.

Moral: Ignore mice.

Alternative moral: Be a mouse.

Marginal Note

The woman who has claimed that she can read the minds of professional politicians must be about as hard-worked as the man who takes the census of horse-flies in Detroit.

Hogwasch again

I am sorry to learn that the best line in the film about the Crusades has already been cut out. It was the tense moment when an English crusader says to Berengaria or somebody, " It's kinder tough for yew, my lady."

It is a pity that this version of the Crusades was made before Mr. Hogwasch's.

Hogwasch has planned some very big scenes, including the storming of Joffa by Richard III, and the King's duel with Saladin, because Saladin forgets to raise his helmet to Queen Matilda of Anjou. Then there is the thrilling scene in which Geoffrey de Bouillon rescues the Moorish maiden, Zara, from a lonely tower on the outskirts of Acre.

Hogwasch was going to call the film " Saladin and the Wonderful Lamp ", but he was dissuaded. It is now to be called " Tents of Love ".

Poetry

Somebody has sent me one of those old-fashioned magazines which brighten a dark hour. Opening it at random I find this under the heading of poetry :

" I shall bind green branches to my forearms
Walking between dead trees
While the sun stares
At my white face
A carved altar
To a smile."

I hope it keeps fine for you, sir.

In Passing

With typical Boche clumsiness the *Deutsche Diplomatisch-Politische Korrespondenz* (familiarly called " Gaga ") recently told the people who were hounded out

of the Baltic States to be settled in Poland that, in the districts where they are to be planted, "the very stones are eloquent of what Germany has created".

Created is the operative word.

The Continental Sunday

"The ride of 'Adam and Eve' in fig leaves over tights passed off without incident."—(Morning paper.)

This is going one better than the Cleethorpes Lady Godiva, who has an enormous mat of false hair trailing over her macintosh.

Recipe for Longevity

The first Englishman to train a lion to put its head in a man's mouth has died at Ilchester, at the age of 109. He always attributed his longevity to the fact that he so often had a lion's head in his mouth. "It made my mouth larger," he said laughingly, "and I was able to eat more."

Bigger Quartets

Mr. Sol Hogwasch has long been of the opinion that when excerpts from famous operas are sung in films there is not nearly enough noise. And he attributes this lack of noise almost entirely to the smallness of quartets. Having seen a recent film, in the course of which something like eighty people join in a famous quartet, he has sent out orders that quartets in his films must consist of at least five hundred voices.

Everything explained

The *Journal of Physiology* has some interesting facts about the temperature of bats — and if you are not interested in the temperature of bats you must lead a pretty empty life.

Bats, apparently, have no constant level of temperature.

Muscular activity, " perhaps reinforced by an outpouring of hormones ", affects the heat of their blood.

It is these hormones, of course, which rule conduct, not only in bats and other animals, but also in human beings. In the tube formed by an involution of glandular epithelium, containing both alveoli and acini, not counting the hepatic lobules of the liver, may be found the springs of all human action from stamp-collecting to fighting.

Men only differ because their secretory cells differ — and that's where hormones come in with a shout. When we say, " He has a strong will," what we really mean is, " In him Schlumberger's pancreatic juices are more active than in other men." When we say, " He is a brave man," what we really mean is, " In him Hertwig's medullary cortex is enlarged by a process of Epinephrin acting on the tertiary thyroxoid."

Interesting Discoveries

Geologists have discovered in certain Arctic clays and in the intercalated boulder-clay of ground moraines in the Alps complete proof of the secretion of honey and water by flowers of the glacial period.

Applying, therefore, what is known of the flora and fauna of the pleistocene period to human beings, we find that the tone of the muscles and the contraction or expansion of the blood-vessels are entirely dependent upon what may be called extra-membranoid myxoedema.

The Gigantic Man of Clermont-Ferrand, one of whose teeth was discovered last year embedded in rock deposits, was clearly acromegalous, and lacked infundibulin.

Astounding Naval Drama

Mr. Sol Hogwasch is choosing, from some thirty thousand applicants, the four thousand beautiful girls he

needs for his forthcoming film based on a story of submarine warfare. To get the local colour right, he has engaged a thousand sailors, and he consults them as to the merits of each girl, thereby ascertaining the type that appeals to the navy.

The story deals with the conflict between love and duty. A young lieutenant in a submarine has a wife in each of four thousand ports, and being the son of a big steel magnate, he can afford to call for each in turn during manœuvres. They are all dancing on board when war is declared.

A telegram arrives from his father, saying that unless the son makes his choice of one wife, he, the father, will sell steel to the enemy. The son denounces his father as a traitor and sticks to the four thousand wives, all of whom turn out to be spies. The submarine is captured and the lieutenant is shot. But he is only wounded. He joins the army and renounces women for ever. But his colonel's wife falls in love with him. " Is there anyone else ? " she asks. " Four thousand," says the lieutenant with a bitter laugh.

Napoleon to them

A man who was fined yesterday for being drunk and disorderly, on being asked his name by a police sergeant, said, " Napoleon to you." That is the kind of joke I like, and it makes me think of the case I read about some years ago. A man fined for the same offence clapped his bowler on his head in the court and said, " Napoleon crossing the Alps." Some moments later he again interrupted the proceedings by putting his hat on sideways and crying, " Napoleon recrossing the Alps."

Laughter in Court

During the hearing of a case somebody asked for a definition of a cliché. The judge said " It's the place

where you put the baby when you go to work, isn't it ? " (Laughter.) The paper from which I take this report adds, " The judge's jocular reference was to crèche, a day nursery for children."

I remember the howls of laughter which greeted another judge's definition of a Cistercian as a hardy plant that grows in almost any soil.

VIII

GERALDINE BRAZIER, BELLE OF THE SOUTHERN COMMAND

I

"GERALDINE BRAZIER, belle of the Southern Command!"

Colonel Fritter's voice trembled with emotion as he gave the toast, and every officer in the mess of the 14th Loyal North West Huntingdonshire Fusiliers knew that he referred to the loveliest W.O.O.F. in the British Army. Yet was there one man who braved the displeasure of his commanding officer and the sneers of his fellows. For Captain Roy Batter-Pudden sat in taciturn silence as the toast was drunk, and heard himself called a prig. And as the port-type circulated more freely and tongues were loosed, the more silent became the Captain.

Outside the mess night fell on the market town of Cuddlingham.

II

Geraldine Brazier, the loveliest W.O.O.F. in the British Army, was always doing odd jobs in the camp of the Loyal North West Huntingdonshire Fusiliers. The officers and the men trusted her implicitly, and her mere presence made them happier. Nobody had any hesitation in talking to her about military matters, since she was so obviously heart and soul in her work. To see the Colonel raise his hat to her on the parade ground was to realise that respect was mingled with admiration. And the adjutant boasted openly that none of his clerks or orderlies knew as much about his private papers as this efficient, serious-minded girl, who turned a blind eye to all attempts at flirtation. It was left to surly Captain Batter-Pudden to mutter that

Geraldine was getting to know too much, and was too deeply in the Colonel's confidence. But Batter-Pudden's black looks only earned him the epithet " Curmudgeon ".

III

Often when some important general arrived at Cuddlingham to inspect the battalion the colonel would say, half in jest, " Oh, and, sir, you really ought to see our prize W.O.O.F." And the general, stroking his moustache, and whacking his leg with a riding switch, would reply, " Ha ! Yes ! I've heard of her. Deuced pretty poppet, they tell me." And then Geraldine, simpering somewhat, and a blush mantling her damask cheek, would be led forward and introduced. And all ranks would cheer to the echo when the general complimented her on her looks. Yet she remained her sweet, innocent, simple self. One day, for instance, the colonel surprised her reading a strictly private memorandum from the headquarters of his command. " Naughty, naughty," he said, taking it from her. " I couldn't understand a word of it," said Geraldine. " What does it mean ? " " Not for little beauties," replied the colonel, mightily relieved.

IV

No higher compliment could have been paid to Geraldine Brazier than when the Colonel said one day in the mess, " I really believe she knows where all my confidential documents are better than I do myself." A murmur of approbation greeted this avowal. But Captain Roy Batter-Pudden was heard to say, " Do we know anything of her antecedents, sir ? " The Colonel gaped awkwardly for a moment. Then he said, " Isn't it enough for us that her Commandant, Mrs. Cluckaway, recommended her highly ? " It was evidently enough for all of them, except the sombre Batter-Pudden.

At this very moment the beautiful W.O.O.F. was making notes from a confidential memorandum that had just arrived. She worked late, and as Batter-Pudden took his way to his quarters he was surprised to see a light coming from under the door of the Colonel's office.

V

When Captain Batter-Pudden saw the light under the door of the Colonel's office, and noted that the time was 11.53 P.M., he said to himself, " How odd ! How very odd ! Who can be working in there at this hour ? " Hoping to surprise some diligent, conscientious brother-officer, he approached the door stealthily, on tiptoe. He said to himself, " I will fling the door open and cry ' Boo ! ' and then laugh at his discomfiture." For Batter-Pudden was a simple-minded man, and fond of elementary jokes.

Creeping up, he laid his hand on the door-handle silently, twisted as though to the manner born, flung it wide and shouted breezily, " Boo ! " For answer, the loveliest girl he had ever seen turned swiftly to face him, and he found himself challenged by the gentian-blue eyes of W.O.O.F. Geraldine Brazier.

VI

For a long moment Batter-Pudden and the girl faced each other in silence. The Captain's thoughts raced through his head like paper-bags in a hurricane. He remembered his suspicions of this superb creature, and as he gazed at her, he found it hard to believe that she was not as innocent as a prawn. Her arched eyebrows expressed surprise at the intrusion, until the Captain began to feel like some dull clod who has blundered into the boudoir of a delicately nurtured peeress. He moistened his dry lips, and shifted on his feet. A slow smile irradiated Geraldine's face. She made no attempt to conceal the

papers she was holding. Finally, with a gasp, Batter-Pudden said, "You!" "Yes," was the reply, "only little me, Captain." Staggering under the impact of her beauty, the soldier felt more and more foolish, like a little boy caught stealing marmalade. "You!" he repeated, as she turned her enormous eyes full on him again.

VII

"What are you doing here?" asked Captain Batter-Pudden, greatly daring. "Looking through these papers," was the reply, delivered in a voice so melodious that the Captain's face assumed the famous Covent Garden gape. Spite of himself, he knew that he was on the brink of falling in love with this radiant creature. Yet he knew where his duty lay. Setting his teeth until his jaw ached, he said sternly, "Pr-pr-private papers — my dear." A blush like the sunset on Helvellyn mantled her cheeks. "You mustn't call me your dear," she said in a small voice, lowering her eyes, and veiling them with lashes that seemed to the Captain's fevered imagination as long as his arm. "Tck, tck," he replied, "I meant nothing by it." "That is what you men always say," replied the W.O.O.F. "This situation must be cleared up," said the Captain. And at that moment his trained ear caught a stealthy step outside in the corridor.

VIII

As that stealthy step approached, there burst upon Captain Batter-Pudden the difficulty of the situation. Here he was alone at midnight in the Colonel's office with a renowned beauty. Geraldine Brazier appeared to be quite unmoved. "Don't you realise——?" began the Captain. Duty and chivalry warred in his brain. Was he to denounce the girl? Was he to protect her, by saying that it was he who had been looking at the papers? How

explain her presence? After a hard struggle, duty won. The door opened, and the Captain stood stiff as a ramrod. It was the Colonel! "You!" cried the Colonel. "You, sir!" exclaimed the Captain, and Geraldine, not knowing to whom the Colonel's cry was addressed, murmured innocently, "You!" Embarrassment hung like a pall on the Colonel's face. He grinned foolishly. "I just looked in, my dear," he said. "You mustn't call me your dear," said Geraldine, smiling at the Captain.

IX

The Colonel's eye fell on a litter of secret documents scattered about the table, and his face changed. "I was just passing the time," said Geraldine. "I hope you have not *read* these," said the Colonel. The Captain smiled sardonically. "Of course, if you don't trust me," said Geraldine sulkily. The Colonel weakened, but Batter-Pudden interposed. "I ask myself, sir," he said, "why should a W.O.O.F. come to your office at midnight to study secret documents?" Duty and chivalry fought for mastery of the Colonel. Chivalry won. "I'm sure," he said, "this little lady acted with the best intentions." At that moment a stealthy step was heard outside in the corridor. "Hide me, hide me!" cried Geraldine in a whisper. Colonel and Captain calmed her panic, and awaited events. Slowly the handle of the door was turning.

X

The door opened, revealing the bland face of Major Horseferry. "Ha!" he said heartily, as he observed the others. The Colonel and the Captain smiled uneasily. "Quite a party," said the Major, "eh, little lady?" Geraldine was about to answer when yet another stealthy step was heard outside. And so the long night wore on. One stealthy step succeeded another, until there were

twelve officers in the Colonel's office. And then Captain Batter-Pudden, addressing them all, said firmly, " Colonel, gentlemen, brother officers, I accuse W.O.O.F. Geraldine Brazier of breaking in here to look at secret documents." There was a gasp of amazement, and the Colonel cried, " Oh, I say, look here, I mean, what." But Geraldine said calmly, " I can explain everything." " Fire away, my dear," said the Colonel.

XI

" Gentlemen," said Geraldine, " I will refrain from pointing out that I might ask how so many officers happen to have crept quietly into this room. What was their business, apart from forcing upon me their unwelcome attentions ? But, no. I will confine myself to the explanation of my own actions. Gentlemen, I was discovered here looking through various documents. I had intended to memorise a few unimportant details. Why ? Because I have — (and here she lowered her voice and her eyes) — an old mother, lonely and impoverished. She is so proud when she knows that her daughter enjoys the confidence of the Army. She thinks I am even consulted by the War Office, and I let her think it, for she has not long to live. But to make her last days happy I have to be able to quote documents of seeming importance. Gentlemen, it is a kind deception, and one that I feel sure you will condone. And——"

At this point yet another of those damnable stealthy steps was heard outside.

XII

An exclamation, perfectly timed, burst from the twelve officers in the Colonel's office, as the door opened slowly to admit a frail old lady, leaning on a large umbrella. From beneath a mop of hair protruded a kindly face, with blue spectacles twinkling above a fat nose. " And who

the devil may you be, madam ? " asked the Colonel, bowing courteously. But before the dear old new-comer could answer, W.O.O.F. Geraldine's cry of " Mater ! What are you doing here ? " sent a thrill through the assemblage. Sardonic, sinister, sombre Captain Roy Batter-Pudden said crabbedly, " Yes, what, indeed, are you doing here — mater ? " The old lady seemed to be overwhelmed. Her lips trembled, and when Geraldine approached and stroked that dear face and muttered, " There, there, dearest mater," Colonel Fritter clandestinely wiped his bloodshot eyes with his sleeve. Then silence fell, as the dear old lady began to whisper to her daughter.

XIII

Those hardened soldiers, who had faced carnage and destruction with steely eyes, were softened by the sight of mother and daughter. They recalled their own mothers — all of them except Batter-Pudden, whose suspicions never slept. As for Colonel Fritter, as though to give the lie to those who say that soldiers are cruel, he sobbed as strong men sob, until the medals on his chest rattled like hail on the tin roof of a railway-shed in mid-November. Still clinging to her enormous mother, Geraldine said, " Gentlemen, my friends. My old sick mater has come to tell me that she does not want me to get any more documents for her. She says that my motives might be misunderstood. Ah, gentlemen, there is no sacrifice she would not make for me." Too moved to speak, they gulped foolishly. All except Batter-Pudden, who had seen mater's spurs beneath her long dress !

XIV

" Why does your mother wear spurs ? " asked Batter-Pudden casually.

For a moment the girl changed colour, and fear came into her eyes.

"Perhaps she came here on horseback," suggested Colonel Fritter.

"Naturally," said Geraldine, "why else should she wear spurs?"

"How else could she have come?" added the Colonel fatuously.

"Is her sight bad?" asked Batter-Pudden.

Geraldine sighed, "Alas!" she said. "she is almost blind. Hence those blue glasses."

"And yet she wants documents to read?"

"I read them to her," said Geraldine.

"My dear daughter, she is so much an angel to me," said mater, speaking for the first time, in a deep, musical voice.

"Where is the horse?" asked Batter-Pudden.

"It goes home of its own accord," replied Geraldine.

"And your mother can see to ride on a moonless night?"

"Only just. It is a great strain for her," said Geraldine quickly.

XV

"Gentlemen," said Batter-Pudden, in an ominously soft voice, "here is the position. A very old lady, half blind and feeble, rides here on horseback on a moonless night to tell her daughter that she doesn't want any more confidential documents read to her. What was her daughter doing here at midnight?"

"What are any of us doing here at midnight?" asked a gallant subaltern.

"He's got you there, Batter-Pudden," said the Colonel, whose sympathies in this matter were obvious.

"Of course," said Geraldine, with a pretty pout, "if you gentlemen don't trust me——"

"There, there, my dear," said Colonel Fritter, "we all trust and admire you."

A chorus of approval came from the assembled officers.

" I wonder," said Batter-Pudden, in a dangerously calm drawl, " I wonder why your dear old mother has a pair of men's braces hanging below her skirt."

XVI

Captain Batter-Pudden's words sent all eyes to Geraldine's dear old mater, who, after a guilty start, said calmly, " These braces which I wear, and which slipped down have, are a family heirloom. They were worn by my grandfather." So saying, the old dame made shift to tuck them in under her skirt, but as she did so a package fell to the floor. Geraldine, whose dainty foot would not have covered a grain of rice, tried to hide it by stepping on it. But Batter-Pudden was before her. He picked it up and handed it to the Colonel. It was addressed to Ludwig von Rümpelgutz ! " Rümpelgutz," said the Colonel. " A German, surely." Then, as though realising what this meant, he turned to Geraldine. At that moment, with a cry (in a deep bass voice) of " Heil, Hitler ! " the old " lady " leaped to the window, smashed it, and dived through !

XVII

" That was not your mother," said Colonel Fritter haughtily to Geraldine Brazier, as Captain Batter-Pudden and several officers dashed in pursuit of Ludwig von Rümpelgutz. But the girl was no whit abashed. " Nein," she said savagely, " and I his daughter am not." " I must ask you for your name," said the Colonel icily. " Dorothea Stüttgarten," replied the pseudo-W.O.O.F. " You know what this means," said the Colonel : " the firing squad."

With a last attempt to melt this iron soldier, the girl softly stroked his sleeve. But the Colonel flicked her hand off as though it had been a bug. " This is no time for dalliance," he barked. " I place you under arrest and

charge you with espionage. It grieves me to be harsh with one so beautiful, but war is war."

Only the sobs of the girl broke the silence.

XVIII

Dawn was breaking over the Tower of London when Colonel Fritter and Captain Batter-Pudden stopped their staff car at the entrance to the Bloody Tower to give the password of the day, which happened to be " Scunthorpe ". From the car descended two blindfolded prisoners — Dorothea Stüttgarten, more beautiful than ever in her anger and mortification, and Ludwig von Rümpelgutz, minus the wig and braces, but still wearing the tell-tale spurs. Colonel Fritter handed a piece of paper and a pencil to the Orderly Officer, who signed for the prisoners, He then bowed low to the girl, holding her hand rather longer than was necessary, while Batter-Pudden turned away from the cold fury of her eyes. A crowd of onlookers murmured sympathetically, and when Rümpelgutz spat at a woman who offered him a carton of 2000 cigarettes, there were cries of pity. Then the cell doors clanged on the prisoners.

XIX

Bang, bang, bang !

A volley rang out, two bodies sagged and fell. Two enemies of England had paid the last dread penalty. Far away in the officers' mess of the Loyal North-West Huntingdonshire Fusiliers, Colonel Fritter complimented Roy Batter-Pudden on having done his duty. But the Colonel did not say that he treasured in his pocket-book a fragrant handkerchief once dropped by the false W.O.O.F. And the Captain did not say that he could not breathe her name without a catch in his throat. Conversation in the mess that night was desultory. Next day a new W.O.O.F. was sent to take the place of " Geraldine " (as

they still affectionately called her). The new-comer was so ugly that the Colonel said heartily, " Spy or no spy, I preferred that other poor gal."

" Hear, hear ! " murmured the officers, sighing heavily.

In Passing

My recent remarks about the English mania for baths appear to have annoyed some people. Good. What amuses me about the whole thing is that so many people today regard perpetual bathing as part of a moral code — and a very high moral code at that. You can accuse a man of living a loose life, but not of failing to have a bath. Close your eyes and think of the number of people you have met who would cheerfully and publicly run off with somebody else's husband or wife, but would think it very dreadful to admit to not having had a bath for a week. And that, little horrors, is enlightenment and progress *et tout le bataclan du tralala.*

The Inscrutable East

A Turkish visitor to London is reported to have said yesterday, " I have never seen Oriental rugs so cheap as in London." The lady, who comes from Constantinople, will find the same rugs (woven in Aldgate) being sold at a slightly higher price in the bazaars there. About the same price are those which are sold outside cafés in Paris. They are made in Auteuil. There is a strong union of rug-sellers, and one of the rules is that the face, hands, and arms must be blacked. The fez is giving way to the bowler. And what they know about this ramp in Bokhara isn't worth knowing. There's more in it than meets the eye, as the tourist said when he peered into Vesuvius.

Without Comment

" In the name of our chief Hitler we find the first articulate syllable stuttered by primitive Aryan man, the sound ' h——d ', which is an expression signifying ' protection ' or ' elevation '. The same sound occurs in ancient German words like hut, hutte, and hild. Adolf, the Leader's first name, is composed of ath (divine or spiritual act) and volfa (creator)."—(*Völkischer Beobachter.*)

Music

I had often wondered why composers of music did not turn more to that swashbuckler Dostoievsky and his rakehelly mates for a libretto or two. Today I read that a Czech once wrote an opera based on Dostoievsky's *A House of the Dead.* Stap me ! I will warrant there were some lilting melodies in that opera.

Nipper Tolstoy's *War and Peace* would make a good opera, if only because it could go on for ever. And while we are talking music, I like this from a criticism : " The clever infant seized on such semiquavers as there are in the first movement to make perpetuo moto effects, but had obviously no notion what the music was about ".

Fulfilling a Long-felt Want

A small boy, who has won the heart of the *News Chronicle* by talking about schools, is reported to have uttered this monumental slab of journalese, which could hardly be bettered by grown-up educational authorities : " If these amenities are secured (light, ventilation, spaciousness, sunshine), it means the recognition of the all-important fact that children's interests are vital to the well-being of the nation ; a better school building is imperative to the proper development of the character and talents of the school-child today, the citizen of the future ".

Reboul and the Elephant

A district commissioner in the Sudan, in the course of a recent address, said, " At one time I had a baby elephant who used to link his little trunk into my crooked arm and take short strolls with me."

That is a charming picture. When it rained up went the D.C.'s umbrella over their two heads.

The baker Reboul, of Nîmes, who wrote such good verse, used to walk about with a small elephant, but it never linked its little trunk into his crooked arm. On the contrary, one day when Reboul had been boasting about his kindness to his pet, and praising the good-nature and intelligence of all animals if only one treats them reasonably, the elephant, without a word of warning, coiled its trunk round him and threw him over a hedge.

A Headmaster's Voice

DEAR SIR,—My attention having been directed to the correspondence about public schools in *Towzer's Threepennorth*, I should like to avail myself of this opportunity of saying that if Mr. Muff cares to visit Narkover he will find a school which admits, nay welcomes, any boy, of whatever class, whose parents can make it worth our while to take him. In the event of the parents being in quod or temporarily broke to the wide, we seek to accommodate them, at a reasonable rate of interest, so that their boys may not be penalised by the parents' folly in getting nabbed or losing the wherewithal. We also advance loans to all and sundry, provided references are satisfactory, and I myself, having had the good fortune to acquire some fine Georgian silver during a visit to friends would consider any reasonable offer. Write Box 29, Narkover. Inspection (on deposit of a small sum) cordially invited.—Yours faithfully, ALEXANDER SMART-ALLICK.

Announcement

" Mrs. de Courcy Foulenough and Colonel Burstaway state that the bigamous marriage arranged between Captain de Courcy Foulenough and Mrs. Amy Burstaway will not now take place."—(Social news.)

Hunting Days and Hunting Ways

Another hunting occasion I am not likely to forget was a run we had from Skidgett Coverts to Mappleby Quarry. Hounds had found in Melpham Woods, lost on the railway line, and recovered scent at Clapiron Farm.

The fox came in sight, and got hysterical, like an excited dog. He went round and round in circles, and the hounds followed suit, and we all followed the hounds. Several followers became giddy and fell off their horses, many hounds were sick, and the deputy Master, who had dismounted, went staggering about like a landlubber in the Bay of Biscay. Several ladies screamed, and to put an end to the farce I drew my pistol and fired at the elusive vermin. Alas! I killed Scroughborough Wonder, our oldest hound. And the fox fell dead from exhaustion. And I was asked to resign. On the way home I shot Miss Lavinia Howling. They begged me not to resign after all.

Faux pas

" At times he hardly seemed to know
what he was singing."—(Musical critic.)

I am caddish enough to remember the occasion when Emilia Rustiguzzi, at a performance of " Ballo in Maschera ", came down to the footlights and, in the midst of a tense silence, shared by the orchestra, began to sing :

" O girls, I'm a devil for fruit, what, what, what! "

Getting down to Business

Mr. Justice Cocklecarrot has been appointed Chairman of a Special Commission to inquire into the epidemic of cat-stealing. In the course of time it is hoped that some 304,768 witnesses will be cross-questioned. Their evidence will be published as an interim report, and the findings of the Commission will be promulgated later. At a preliminary meeting of the Commission, the caretaker's cat scratched Cocklecarrot on both hands. " I hope someone steals the little beast," said the judge somewhat indiscreetly.

" *Twenty Years of Uproar* "

Giuseppe Ravioli and Emilia Rustiguzzi were the most temperamental singers I ever met. They would sing a love duet like a couple of Sicilian brigands rowing about the proceeds of a theft. And, since they loathed each other, the effect was extraordinary. I remember once in Munich, during a love scene, he had to embrace her. The result was a kind of wrestling and boxing bout. Nobody could hear what they were singing as they fought it out. Finally they both fell into the orchestra pit. She emerged with two black eyes, and he with a fractured jaw. Yet audiences liked to see them playing together, as they had such powerful personalities.

One day, as I was strolling along the promenade at Weymouth, I paused in front of a pierrot troupe. A youngster was singing a trivial song about eventide, but I knew a born singer when I heard one. Ten years later that youngster was the leading tenor at the Frankfurt State Opera House. His name was Chaliapin — or Mme. Patti — I forget which. One discovers so many people.

I was once taking tea with Rossini in his flat in the Via

Sistina in Rome when a lady called to have her daughter's voice tested. " I can't make out," said the lady, " whether she will be a soprano or a mezzo-soprano." Rossini put down a half-eaten muffin and said to the girl, " Give me your A." The girl opened her mouth (" O.K., Miss Maclean," murmured Rossini maliciously) and let out a note. Rossini went on with his muffin. " What do you think she'll be ? " asked the anxious mother. " The first peripatetic woman coal merchant in Trastevere," said Rossini, finishing his muffin with singular aplomb.

On the eve of the annual Dvořák concert at Pilsen, Richter, on glancing over the score of " Die Erben des Weissen Berges ", discovered an interpolated note at the end of the fourth bar. Puzzling over this, he called in the famous musical publishers Opp, Schkipp, and Jump, who could make nothing of this intruding note. Then Dr. Walpurgis (of Walpurgis, Nacht and Co.) discovered, with the aid of a microscope, that the note in question was a coffee-stain. The offending score was taken away by Polter, Geist, and Polter, furniture removers, and an unblemished one substituted. And that was how I met Brahms.

At the Pull-up

Lady Lydia: I say, Lady Joan, who is that lovely creature sharing a cheap cigarette with Lieutenant-General Lord Arthur ?

Lady Joan: Darling, don't you recognise her ? It's Marchioness Mabel. She's a tram-driverette now.

Lady Lydia: Then that healthy colour does not come out of a box ?

Lady Joan: Oh, no. It comes from doin' a good job of work.

Both together: Let's be tram-drivers.

[Both think: " But I bet she's using Slobbo all the same. I know I'm not going to give it up."]

Too bad

I wrote half in jest about the speculators who follow the war anxiously, seeing it as a background for their own absurd antics. I now read that the Cairo Stock Exchange fell into such a panic when Mussolini disappeared that a deputation called on the Finance Minister to express " deep concern at the rumours of an early Italian peace ". The Minister, with a touch of humour not always to be found in such quarters, replied that he did not see his way to ask the Allies to slow down the war in order to stabilise the Cairo stock market.

The Best Contemporary Thought

It would be a dull world without the popular scientists. Three of them have now discovered that by " controlling the intake of calories during the early stages of growth " it should be easy for everybody to live well beyond 100. The system is called " cradle control ", but the patients in the cradles were white rats. " Instead of dying after 600 days, they lived 1068 days, which, in human life, would correspond to 107 years."

Could anything be more neatly, more conclusively proved ? It is a pleasure to be in touch with such notable examples of the best contemporary thought.

Well I never did !

> " He wrote the words he didn't understand on the walls of his room to memorise them."—(Evening paper.)

A dangerous habit. William Allingham says that when Tennyson was learning Italian he wrote down the words he didn't know on his white chimney-piece. He went away for a few days, and returned to find all the words washed

off. The woman who looked after him said : " I thought it was dirt."

The Democratic Touch

" He wears probably the widest collar in Westminster."—(Evening paper.)

That is a very grave statement to make about an elected representative of the people. Without the word " probably " one would suspect that somebody is going about measuring members' collars, and even compiling statistics about the size of their necks. But nobody can deny that it is such homely details as this that endear the members to the electorate. No Englishman or woman could resist such an appeal to the emotions. They say, " There cannot be much wrong with such a man. His heart, like his neck, is probably in the right place. We will vote for him rather than for the man with the longest umbrella. No offence meant."

Hogwasch

Asked what his future plans were, Hogwasch said yesterday : " The time has come for something novel in filmicraft and picturecology. The public is commandeering exorbitant spectacles, renditions of the upstanding dramas of history. The quintessential thing is to make sure that the efforts of us who cooter for the crowd shall co-respond with the volitions of our patroons. I have a magniloquent idea for a sago which would be a presentiment of Colombo discovering America, with all its bathos and intractability."

Advice

" Some advice, please, for reducing my arms. They bulge out at the top."—(Beauty page.)

My dear lady, this is definitely ghastly. Do you mean that your shoulders have that padded look which Yankees

confuse with manly vigour? Or do you mean that they continue into a sort of mound, up to the tip of the ear, like the arms of Lola Montez after an evening of highbrow talk with Wagner and Ludwig of Bavaria? When the man who has been after you like a hound for months suddenly edges nearer to your pretty friend and jots down a telephone number on his cuff, you can be sure that he has seen your bulging arms, and that from now on the victory can only be won in the gymnasium.

By the way, if you don't like this sort of writing, now is the moment to protest. Every letter will be thrown unopened into a capacious basket.

Bed-time Story

Once, Agnes, that enormous great soprano was a teeny-weeny girlie like you, and a bad, bad tiger came and frightened her, and she grew up, and the tiger came again, and she ate it at one mouthful, just to keep up her strength.

With Acknowledgments

I am deeply indebted to the *National Rooster*, the journal of University College, Dublin, for this: "A lady who was accompanying her husband to Africa decided to take her pedigree Chow with her. The Chow, in hydrophobiac frenzy, bit a Kaffir servant. He recovered, to the amazement of the doctors, and the dog died. The Kaffir afterwards made his fortune with a touring circus. He was exhibited as the 'Coon the Old Chow Died of'."

Mrs. Wretch on Education

"In future no man should consider himself educated until he can do shorthand, make a model of the New London in coloured bricks, estimate the cost of an inter-

national airport, manage a television set, fill in forty forms in six hours, take part in a Gallup poll, and give a chemical analysis of every meal he eats."—(MRS. WRETCH, M.P.)

The Patter of Big Feet

I foresee a new racket. If children with big feet are to get extra clothing coupons, you will see some pretty enormous feet dangling over the edges of perambulators and peeping out of swaddling clothes.

I hear already of a kindly lady who stooped above a pram and stroked a baby's face. The face was unshaven ; the baby was a husband of forty-seven, who was only too ready to display size eights, while sucking his huge thumb and muttering in a deep voice, " Me want ikkle booties to wear, like Hell me do."

In Passing

I thought the best moment in the film about Colonel Blimp was when the German officer is telling Blimp that a filthy fighter must be fought with his own filthy methods. Blimp replies that we fought the last war as honourably and cleanly as possible — and won it.

The New Drug

Dr. Strabismus (Whom God Preserve) of Utrecht, having returned from the Karakoram mountains with a strange herb, has concocted a drug which, when taken in moderation by sportsmen, fills them with the well-known team spirit. They cease to be individualists, and think only of the good of the side.

The drug was tried on two football teams the other day, but an overdose produced unfortunate results. The players showed a powerful and stubborn disinclination to go near the ball, for fear they might be accused of thinking of themselves before their side. The referee, who was un-

drugged, tried to induce somebody to set the ball rolling, but all hung back and prated about the team-spirit and character, and so on.

Such nobility nauseated the spectators, who had paid to see football, and not a lot of renunciation. Finally, both teams burst into tears and swore never to rob each other of the ball. The doctor explained that this was the after-effects of the drug.

Answers to Correspondents

ENID.—If he looks as though he were going to be sick every time he meets you now, in the very heyday of your romance, think what it will be like if you marry him.

JOAN.—You say that he seems to wear no shirt. That is certainly eccentric, but so long as he wears the other usual garments (coat, waistcoat, trousers, etc.) no great harm is done.

MABEL.—If he seems to forget you are there while he is eating it may be that he is somewhat of a glutton. Cough lightly between his mouthfuls and he may look up and answer the love in your eyes.

WILLIAM.—Love is built on mutual trust. If she finds out that your Old Reptonian braces are a mere façade, bought in the Strand, and that you were never a Reptonian, her world will collapse in ruins like a house of cards.

Down, Mrs. Rinkweil H. Hufnagle!

I was about to invent a silly piece of news to fill up space when my eye was caught by the story of a lady who took her dog to a film theatre in New York. They wouldn't admit the dog, so the lady bit the commissionaire's hand, and one of her front teeth broke and fell to the carpet.

Now the moral of this story is that we ought to leave biting to our dogs, who do it better. If the dog had been a

little gentleman it would have reproved the lady for biting the man, and would have left her in the cloak-room while it went in to see the film.

What are they Advertising?

"A man walked into the north transept of Westminster Abbey yesterday, produced a bugle from under his coat, and blew two or three loud blasts. He left before the verger could speak to him."—(News item.)

"Just as he was starting his sermon a young man entered and hurled an orange across the church at the preacher."—(News item.)

In Glorious Technicolour

"As the battle of Agincourt was fought in October, the leaves of the trees will be dyed with sprays to give the illusion of autumn tints."—(Film note.)

With Comment

At a recent meeting of scientists a speaker said that it was wrong that science students should have to study a dead language for entry into a University. On the contrary, the old kind of education is the only one that can possibly produce a cultured scientist in place of an arrogant and narrow-minded specialist.

New Tactics

"And is this your darling little mother, baby? What a sweetly pretty creature! May I give her a kiss — it's just an electioneering custom, you know. Now, you stay here and mind the pram, while I take mother for a snorter."—(Foulenough at Bilgewater.)

Eskimo Ballet

I am glad a backer has at last been found for the Eskimo Ballet. Their first production will be " Goo-Takuva-Ra " (" The Seal with a Broken Nose "). Those who are accustomed to sprightly dancing will be disappointed. The beauty of Eskimo ballet is mainly static. Movements do occur now and then, but only when the dancers are cramped. The music is monotonous, and consists of three notes repeated by a child on a hollow whale's-tooth flute. Mr. Geraint Studleigh wrote of Eskimo ballet in the *Morgue* thus : " These ponderous and earth-bound gestures are eloquent of the prehistoric strength of the rocks. Seal noises emanate from the thick lips of the dancers, and one seems to sense the eternal tragedy of nature in the hopeless immobility which roots the interpreters of her moods in passionate apathy. Here is Cyclopean imponderability, and what Scutz called the impassibility of primitive life "

Forward and Onward

Here is an extract from a musical criticism of the near future : " . . . Strictly speaking, of course, this symphony is not a symphony at all, but its superb ideology more than compensates for that. The perpetual din of the brasses symbolises admirably the forward movement of the progressive forces of mankind to a new and better world. And there is the thrill of youth in the composer's complete disregard of tempo, melody, co-ordination and form. The whole piece is a defiant yell. It is the triumph of enlightened politics over what used to be known as art."

That Dame was a Swell Dish

" Don't thank your hostess for the good time you had at her party. Next time you see her, just say, ' That was sort

of a pretty thing you cooked up at your house the other night '."—(American paper.)

An Unfortunate Mistake

" An enterprising horseflesh racketeer, on the prowl for a dainty dish, made a bid of thirty shillings for Lady Cabstanleigh at an auction of cart-horses. The auctioneer absent-mindedly knocked her ladyship down, but, on perceiving she was not a horse, the racketeer apologised and withdrew his bid."—(Foulenough News Agency.)

And again

The scene was the Spavined Horse, a night-club upon which the police had had their eye for many weeks. In the tastefully decorated Assyrian bar the usual poisonous hair-oil mess was being consumed in great quantities, while on the yellow glass floor of the supper-room couples were dancing languidly, to the raucous strains of a genuine Persian orchestra. A gentleman in evening dress, whose lightning glances betrayed the police-officer, was being pressed to champagne by every party which hoped to avoid having names taken. When he had drunk as much as he wanted, and had had a thoroughly enjoyable evening, the mysterious gentleman took the names and telephone numbers of three of the most vivacious girls present and left the club.

It was only when he had gone that the word " Foulenough " began to pass from lip to lip.

Mrs. Wretch

Mrs. Wretch said yesterday at Uttoxeter : " If schooling is to be delayed until the child is three years old, there must be nursery schools to fill in the time between birth and school age. It is most important, during these formative

years, to protect the children from the ignorance of mothers, who know nothing about bringing them up in a manner which will satisfy the State inspectors, and who, in any case, must have time to fulfil their more important civic duties."

Tail-piece

A man claimed the other day that his sheep had fallen sick because the noise on an airfield kept them awake. The best cure for insomnia in sheep is for them to count shepherds going through a gap in an inn.

THE END

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